

S 1990 Farm Bill  
333.72 Forum (1989 :  
v26mp Billings, Mont.)  
1989 Montana's  
perspective

# 1990 Farm Bill

STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

MAR 26 1990

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY  
1515 E. 6th AVE.  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620

## Montana's Perspective

Proceedings of the Forum  
Held August 29, 1989  
Billings, Montana

PLEASE RETURN

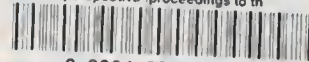
Montana Chapter  
Soil and Water  
Conservation Society



MONTANA STATE LIBRARY

S 333.72 M26mpp 19897 c.1

Montana's perspective : proceedings to th



3 0864 00066679 5

# Foreward

In an attempt to give Montana's agricultural, conservation, environmental and other interest groups an opportunity to explain their positions on how pending farm bill legislation should deal with conservation issues, the Soil and Water Conservation Society held a Farm Bill Forum, August 29, 1989.

At the forum, speakers examined a 1990 Farm Bill that could expand landmark conservation provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act, which linked conservation of highly erodible cropland and the preservation of wetlands to eligibility for U.S. Department of Agriculture farm programs.

Over 30 speakers from various groups expressed ideas about a new farm bill, and this discussion made the forum a success.

These Proceedings capture speakers' ideas, thoughts, and reflections. How Montana agricultural, conservation, environmental and other groups saw the 1985 Farm Bill and how they envision a 1990 Farm Bill is documented in these Proceedings.

The Soil and Water Conservation Society is an international organization of professional conservationists dedicated to promoting the art and science of wise land use.

Donald J. Anderson  
*President*  
**Montana Chapter**  
**Soil and Water Conservation Society**



# Contents



Clint Peck, Editor, Montana Farmer Stockman	1
Karen Barclay, Director, Montana Division of Natural Resources and Conservation	1
Legislative Issues Affecting Montana's Natural Resources	2
Tom Beck, Chairman, Senate Agriculture Committee	
FSA Planning Progress	3
Dick Gooby, State Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service	
Impacts of Compliance	5
Everett Snortland, Director, Montana State Department of Agriculture	
Soil Erosion in Montana	6
Bob Lane, President, Montana Association of Conservation Districts	
Fish and Wildlife Issues in Montana	8
Bob Marinka, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks	
Montana's Range Resources	10
Clayton Marlow, Professor of Range Science, Montana State University	
Washington, D.C. Update	10
Jon Doggett, Agriculture Representative, Representative Ron Marlenee	

## Interest Groups

Alternative Energy Resource Organization	Tom Elliott, <i>Chairperson</i>	11
Farm Bureau	Andy Neal, <i>Executive Vice President</i>	12
Farmers Union	Ken Siroky, <i>Member, Board of Directors</i>	13
Fort Peck Tribes	Debi Madison, <i>Environmental Engineer</i>	14
Grain Growers Association	Larry Johnson, <i>President</i>	15
Montana Association of Conservation Districts	Peggy Robles, <i>Executive Vice President</i>	17
Montana Dept. of Health and Environmental Sciences	Jack Thomas, <i>Environmental Specialist</i>	19
Montana Salinity Control Association	Jane Holzer, <i>Program Director</i>	20
	Pete Purvis, <i>Supervisor</i>	
Montana State University	Dr. James Welsh, <i>Dean of Agriculture</i>	22
	Jim Johnson, <i>Extension Agronomist</i>	
Montana Stockgrowers Association	Jimmie L. Wilson, <i>Spokesperson on Agricultural Policy</i>	23
Montana Woolgrowers Association	Bob Gilbert, <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>	25
National Wildlife Federation	Tom France, <i>Director</i>	26
	<i>Northern Rockies Natural Resource Center</i>	
Northern Plains Resource Council	Monte Mlekush, <i>Chairperson</i>	29
Rural Area Development Association	Jim Stephens, <i>Agricultural Policy Subcommittee</i>	31
Society for Range Management	Public Affairs Committee	31
Western Organization of Resource Councils	Helen Waller, <i>Vice President</i>	33
Women Involved in Farm Economics	Esther Ruud, <i>Past President</i>	34





**Clint Peck, moderator***Editor***Montana Farmer Stockman**

For just a bit of a background on myself, I've been editor of the *Montana Farmer Stockman* magazine based in Billings for about 2 1/2 years. Prior to that, I was county extension agent in Judith Basin County. Before that, I did various ranch work after graduating from Montana State University in agricultural production.

In the time that I served as county extension agent in Judith Basin County, I was able to see first hand with a lot of the producers in the area, the introduction of the 1985 Food Security Act.

Since 1985, we've all witnessed a dramatic change in the farming landscape. This is not only true in Montana, but in the farming landscape across the country. I think along with that change we've also seen a dramatic change in the consciousness of land and water resource management across the country. I think that's very significant and I think it's very probable that this consciousness will be rejuvenated and revived when the ink dries on the 1990 Farm Bill.

We still have a long way to go in addressing the many land and water resource issues that face agriculture, that face our environmental quality in Montana and across the country. Several things that come to mind are wind erosion, noxious weeds, saline seep, ground and surface water contamination, soil erosion, and riparian degradation. I think these are some things we'll be discussing today as the program goes along.

As we look at the solutions to agricultural land and water resource issues we should keep in focus the rights and privileges of private land ownership, and then balance those rights and privileges with the need to maintain the viability of our natural resources so that they can continue to renew themselves and rejuvenate themselves from season to season and year to year.

**Karen Barclay***Director***Montana Division of Natural Resources and Conservation**

I want to welcome and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to participate in this Farm Bill Forum.

Looking through the participants' list, it is obvious that many groups with varied interests are concerned and want to be involved with the formation of farm bill legislation. It is important that all groups in Montana attempt to work for a common goal—a goal that will provide fair legislation that will allow our agricultural industry to operate profitably and at the same time protect the environment.

I believe this can be accomplished. We spend too much time talking to ourselves, when actually our wants and needs may not be that far apart. We, at times, are too divided in our efforts, and it is essential that meetings such as this help pull groups together so we have a more united front.

We only have four congressional members and they have to have cooperation on the future direction of farm legislation. I realize that the main intent of this forum isn't to unite groups but rather to allow groups to speak on their concerns and desires with the 1990 Farm Bill.

I applaud the Society's efforts to include all interested parties—not only for the congressional delegates' and legislators' information, but also so the individual groups will have a working knowledge of what others are thinking, saying and are interested in.

We, at the state level, are very interested in your views and concerns as well. If there is any way we can provide assistance or work with you on issues you are interested in, please do not hesitate to let us know.

## Tom Beck

*Chairperson*

**Senate Agriculture Committee**

### **Legislative Issues Affecting Montana's Natural Resources**

I sit on the Environmental Quality Council. The last interim we studied the forest industry in depth trying to come up with some solutions to the water quality problems that were being generated by some forest practices. Our conclusion was not to put something in the codes that's going to mandate to the people, but to give them some incentives to do proper practices. What we wound up with is that any private landowner who's going to do a forest practice should notify the Department of Forestry or Department of State Lands before the project begins. The Department of State Lands will consult with this individual on his forest practice, give him some direction on where to build roads, and how to log in a proper perspective.

The House and Senate passed a resolution asking the no-burn policy in our park system and our wilderness system be looked at. What we found when trying to defend West Yellowstone and Cooke City from fires was that maybe there was a point where that fire should have been deterred in such a dry season. I hope the Forest Service and the Park Service will take a look at what the state legislature did recommend about the no-burn policy. We didn't ask that it be completely eliminated, we just asked for some adjustments in it.

In the mining industry we passed several other pieces of legislation. One of them is that there will not be an exclusion of five acres or more for the small miner. This has been reduced to two acres on plots or mines for reclamation on that ground. This reclaims some of what we call the "small miners" who are using water or whatever means to placer mine gold. We also exempted any small miner from a cyanide lead type of process mining. They've got to comply with the same permitting processes as the large mines, no matter who or what they're doing.

Another bill that I sponsored was Senate Bill 310. It revised the Middle Mines Tax that is put

on miners on gross proceeds. What that bill did was put mines on an even playing field with the Department of Revenue. There was a large discrepancy between what the assay report valued the ore at versus the ore at the smelter site. There was this continual battle between the Department of Revenue and the mining industry. I think both parties felt good after the bill was written because they're both on the same playing field now.

In the Fish and Wildlife Parks Division, we had what appeared to be a controversial bill, House Bill 754, which was a stream restoration bill. This levies \$.50 on all fishing licenses and \$1 on all non-fishing licenses to be used by the Fish and Game Department for stream restoration. The bill was strictly to take this money for stream restoration, but I think it will help agriculture in the long run.

Coming off the drought we had a lot of water legislation. We are going to require that in almost all the landfill dumps in the state that wells be drilled so that we can detect any pollution or seepage into the groundwater. We haven't found the solution to stop the leakage, but at least we're going to be aware if there are some pollutants in the groundwater. We've also included in that same bill, a moratorium on any outside waste coming into the state.

Also, Senate Joint Resolution 19 directs the Environmental Quality Council to study and work with the EPA in trying to get some funds to help us with the stringent regulations that the federal government has put on solid waste landfill disposal sites. It's going to be very difficult for Montanans to stay within costs and try to meet these federal regulations. This last session we passed legislation that's going to register underground storage tanks since there are, no doubt, some that leak. Pollutants are getting into municipal water systems. We've got documentation of that in 50 different communities in the state. To correct it we have passed a law that requires contractors to learn how the EPA wants these tanks installed and repaired. Along with that bill, we've also passed a bill for \$.01 gas tax to be put on all the people in the state for the cleanup of waste that has leaked out of underground storage tanks or aboveground storage.



Getting into water issues, we have passed some bills. Senate Bill 166 allows the administration of temporary preliminary decrees and preliminary decrees within the district court. Previous to that they were being handled by a water court that was completely out of our district. We're hoping the bill solved that problem. Senate Bill 167 will allow the courts to reopen water right decrees for objections, but only on objections that have not been heard or adjudicated or litigated previous to that.

Senate Bill 169 allows temporary preliminary decrees and preliminary decrees to be used for adjudication and administration purposes of water rights. The reason we can't come up with a final decree is that many streams in the state are still going to be litigated due to federal and Indian claims on some streams. A resolution could be 10 years down the road, but to get the process moving, we've allowed the courts to go ahead and administer on temporary preliminary decrees and preliminary decrees.

Senate Bill 183 includes the Missouri River Basin in the water reservation process. July 1, 1989, has been established as the origination date of the reservation and all reservations have to be filed by December 31, 1993. Senate Bill 447 amends the water reservation law to allow that the date you submit a complete application for a water reservation will be your priority date on that reservation. Previous to this you waited until there was board action by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation before you actually had a date.

Probably the most controversial bill during the session was House Bill 707, the Water Leasing Bill. A study on this subject has been authorized. What the Fish and Game has been allowed to do is to find stream reaches within Montana and see if they can find a place where there is no opposition to leasing water to see if leasing is beneficial. I think we need to determine the length of time that they need the water, volume of water that's going to be needed, and the effects on junior appropriators. Under existing law any time you can't use your water it just goes to the next appropriator on the stream. We need to identify with those problems or else we'll never see water leasing in the state of Montana.

## Dick Gooby

### State Conservationist Soil Conservation Service

#### FSA Planning Progress

The 1985 Food Security Act was created by Congress and many Department of Agriculture agencies are carrying out that congressional mandate. Soil Conservation Service, ASCS, Extension, Farmers Home Administration, Federal Crop Insurance, and many others have been involved.

SCS extends a special thanks to conservation districts and the Montana Association of Conservation Districts for all of their work in helping to get the conservation job done and their continuing work in that aspect. District supervisors reviewed all FSA conservation plans and provided us many comments on alternative conservation systems.

FSA has also given us the opportunity to work more closely with Montana Grain Growers; Farm Bureau; Montana Salinity Control Association; livestock organizations, including the Montana Woolgrowers, Montana Cattlemen and Montana Cowbellies, and the Montana Grazing District Association; Farmers Union; WIFE; and many others I have not mentioned. Many of these groups helped us by explaining the conservation provisions to their members and encouraging them to get their plans completed.

SCS strongly believes in the voluntary approach to conservation. We have more than 50 years of experience providing quality technical assistance to producers who want to apply conservation. With FSA our interest is to help farmers who choose to comply with the conservation provisions stay eligible for farm programs.

Our goal is to keep Montana's agricultural producers in business, while at the same time help them develop conservation systems they can live with and still accomplish Congress' intent.

We've been very busy at SCS for three years with FSA. Let's look at what's happened.

**Conservation Compliance**

Highly Erodible Land Planning Workload:  
In Montana, 13.5 million acres of 18 million  
acres or 75 percent, is highly erodible.

**FSA Conservation Planning****Planning Progress by Acres:**

		Cumulative
1987	.8 million acres	.8 million acres
1988	5.6 million acres	6.4 million acres
1989	4.7 million acres	11.1 million acres

**Number of Plans:**

1987	2,000	2,000
1988	7,600	9,600
1989	5,300 (As of July)	14,900

**FSA Plans Applied:**

1987	.4 million acres	3 million acres
1988	1.7 million acres	2.0 million acres
1989	2.4 million acres	4.4 million acres

4.4 million acres is 33 percent of the highly erodible cropland. We still have to help producers apply plans on 66 percent of the highly erodible land, and many of these producers have not worked with us or conservation districts before.

Amount remaining to be applied by 1995:  
9.1 million acres

**Resource Management Systems Planning**

FSA plans address erosion on only highly erodible cropland. They do not consider a producer's entire resource base. FSA plans also do not fully consider cropland needs. Half of the soil's organic matter on farmed soils has been depleted. We are the Soil Conservation Service, and must consider all needs of soil, in addition to erosion control. During FSA planning, we encouraged farmers and ranchers to develop complete conservation plans.

These complete conservation plans are based on Resource Management Systems. They contain several options for producers to choose from in order to bring erosion to tolerable levels on range, hayland, pastureland or forestland, as well as their cropland.

Many producers have opted to develop a complete conservation plan based on our resource management system. We applaud these producers.

**RMS Planning Progress**

		Cumulative
1987	1.4 million acres	1.4 million
1988	6.1 million acres	7.5 million
1989	4.9 million acres	12.4 million

**Conservation Reserve Program**

In nine signups, Montana has done its share in meeting the national goal of 40-45 million acres enrolled in CRP.

March 86	13,700
May 86	110,500
August 86	219,000
March 87	875,200
July 87	616,043
Feb. 88	280,400
Aug. 88	282,523
Feb. 89	197,524
TOTAL	2.5 million acres

An estimated 300,000 additional acres were added to the CRP in the ninth sign-up, which ended in early August. This is a 100,000-acre increase from the eighth sign-up.

**Wetland Determinations**

Not as big a workload as FSA compliance planning.

		Cumulative
1987	10,000	10,000
1988	87,000	97,000
1989	185,000	282,000

FSA has been a tool to help conservation districts achieve erosion control goals. FSA has helped resolve inconsistencies in former federal farm programs. In the past we were urging producers to participate in conservation programs, while on the other hand, encouraging them to produce surplus commodities to the soil's detriment. FSA has brought USDA agencies together as a conservation team. Those many team members include the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, conservation districts, commodity groups, and many others.



## Everett Snortland

*Director*

**Montana State Department of  
Agriculture**

### **Impacts of Compliance**

Montana's agricultural heritage is almost unexcelled as our state's 147,000 square miles and 93.2 million acres encase 60.7 million acres of land in farms and ranches. This is second only to Texas. Montana is fourth in the nation with approximately 2.4 million acres in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Agriculture is the number one industry in Montana. We usually rank about second in the nation in spring wheat production, third in winter wheat production, third in barley and second in oat production. We are sixth in sheep and wool production, seventh in beef cattle production, eighth in sugar beet production and 12th in alfalfa hay production. We produce all forms of livestock, potatoes, canola, corn, cherries, grapes, hay, honey and other alternative crops.

I was born and raised on a grain farm southwest of Conrad, Montana, that was home-steaded by my grandfather in 1909. I have experienced the impact of farm programs as an active small grain producer, and as a state legislator, lobbyist, and an administrator, serving as the state executive director of the Montana Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service from July 1981 to January 1989, and currently serving as director of the Montana Department of Agriculture. Through all of this I have grown to appreciate the complexity of the issues we face and the enormous responsibility of appropriately dealing with the difficulties associated with these issues.

As we look at the continuing decline in our population associated with direct agricultural production, we can suspect that many of the provisions of the 1990 Farm Bill will be made by nonfarmer/ranchers. As long as we are able to provide an abundant supply of cheap food we must anticipate a disproportionate increase in environmental concerns involving such issues as food safety, clean air and clean water,

farm worker safety, conservation, endangered species and animal rights. It is a foregone conclusion that as an industry, we must address these issues. I am confident that our legislative representatives can balance these issues while maintaining the viability of our strong agricultural industry. We must balance these things with production realism in addressing issues such as noxious weeds on federal lands, the Russian Wheat Aphid, and export demands in relation to world and domestic need.

An example of what we face was illustrated at a national conference on organic and sustainable agriculture in March 1989. Dr. Charles Benbrook, executive director of the board of agriculture, National Academy of Sciences, cautioned those eager for an immediate turn around from the reliance on agrichemicals to diversified, organic systems that they must be patient. He said, "I think it is very important for us not to underestimate the difficulty of a farmer going to a new diversified ag system."

We have seen individual states addressing many key issues. Montana agriculture took the bull by the horns and worked with environmental groups to pass HB 757, addressing ag chemicals in the groundwater. As states move forward to resolve issues such as this, the federal government should use restraint. Let states address their needs. It has proven to be effective to allow states to move forward with their individual programs, certifying those programs to meet federal legislative requirements. The EPA and USDA/APHIS programs are examples of this cooperative process that enables states to address issues on a local basis. Although all cooperative programs can be improved, this process works and can continue to work while being more responsive, and less expensive to the taxpayer.

I sincerely encourage the legislature to work to balance the 1990 Farm Bill. We cannot allow extreme positions to dictate development of its provisions. Montana has the capability to work cooperatively with you to address the issues facing us in the 1990s. Let's work together to provide flexibility for local input and response to provide the ability to address differing geographical considerations and parameters.

## Bob Lane

*President*

### Montana Association of Conservation Districts

#### Soil Erosion in Montana

I've been asked to address the problem of soil erosion in Montana and how the Food Security Act of 1985 is working to lessen the impact of erosion on our soil resource and water quality.

Part of the problem lies in our perception of erosion. Of over 1,100 producers surveyed last winter by John Saltiel of Montana State University, only 25 percent thought agricultural activities contributed to erosion. Like myself, most said it was their neighbors that were causing the problems. Only 10 percent said their farming practices were contributing to the problem.

I believe part of the misconception is the mental image most of us have of erosion. We tend to think of gullies five or ten feet deep cutting through fields or drifting dirt covering fences four or five feet deep. That is erosion, but so is the loss of five tons/acre, be it caused from wind or water. It is a serious problem and can be nearly imperceptible at times.

There are several factors that cause erosion, or contribute to the problem in some manner:

- Fickle Mother Nature — no rain or too much rain and snow.
- Government programs and policies — (let it burn, fence row to fence row).
- Poor planning on producers' part — not taking a holistic look at practices and thinking about cause and effect. Forgetting that basic law of physics — equal and opposite reaction.
- Financial problems.
- Plain old greed—converting fragile range to cropland.

In 1980, Congress directed the Soil Conservation Service to conduct a national resource inventory as part of the Resource Conservation Act. The inventory showed wind is the primary cause of erosion in Montana. SCS inventories in 1982 and 1987 bring to light some disturbing trends. Erosion rates had risen from 7 tons/acre in 82 to 8 tons/acre/year in 87.

Five tons/acre is the maximum tolerable loss ("T") for cropland to maintain productivity. The NRI survey shows that 9.3 million acres eroded at greater than "T" in 1987, or 52 percent of Montana's 18 million acres of cropland.

Montana must be unique in that 75 percent of that 18 million acres is classified as highly erodible and the NRI survey reinforces that classification.

We need to keep in mind that climatic conditions were not the best in large portions of Montana to get adequate stubble to keep soil from blowing in 1987, and that was also before most of the 14,000 Food Security Act plans were written or implemented. We need to remember implementation isn't mandatory until 1990 and producers have until 1995 to have their plans fully implemented.

The NRI preliminary data shows that approximately 140 million tons of soil were lost in Montana.

All of us—producers, Congress, SCS, Extension Service, and Conservation Districts—have a big job ahead. Congress has to keep the program funded adequately to see the implementation part of FSA completed. Congress is faced with fiscal constraints, but the money spent on erosion control and improving water quality will bring a greater benefit to all our citizens than programs like American Heritage Trust Fund.

Education of producers in conservation tillage and residue management is the only solution available to control erosion problems on cropland at this time. Residue management is the primary practice in Montana's FSA plans. No till and minimum till are options that some producers wish to use, but it is not mandated in anyone's plan that I'm aware of.

We must not overlook our range resource in this process. The headwaters for every river basin in this state is in rangeland and the condition of that range can have a significant impact on water quality and quantity. Montana has 67 million acres of rangeland and 35-40 million of those acres are private lands. Sixty



percent of our rangeland is in good to excellent condition. That means there are 20 million acres that need better range management which again requires education of a lot of ranchers. We are confident that there will be significant soil savings once producers fully implement their plans. How significant those savings will be is unknown at this time, but we do know the impact the Conservation Reserve Program has had in Montana and the nation.

SCS estimates that 32 million tons/year are being saved on Montana's 2.5 million acres of CRP—over 609 million tons nationwide.

Sodbusting is another area of concern here in Montana. It seems to be slowing down for several reasons. The Food Security Act is helping, as well as other legislation enacted by Congress that has removed some of the economic incentives for sodbusting. Declining land values has put a damper on it.

Conservation districts have an important role in the implementation of the conservation provisions of the Food Security Act. Those 59 districts are responsible for reviewing each of the 14,000 plans that have been developed so far. That is approximately 80 percent of the plans that need to be written.

Supervisors are a good check and balance. They help to keep a balance in how the plans are written, making sure the producers and the public interests are protected, and also alerting SCS people when a producer may be overestimating yields. Most supervisors are ranchers or farmers themselves and they know what is reasonable in their area and what isn't.

To conservation districts, the FSA has accelerated attaining our goal of controlling soil erosion in Montana. Although all the FSA plans being developed are only on the highly erodible acres, we would like to see a conservation plan developed for all the land in each producer's unit.

That has been one of the dissatisfactions for the supervisors on our board in Gallatin County. We would like to be able to develop a plan for the total ranch or farm. We have had to ask for

some restrictions for managing stubble on high yielding ground to be eased. In some cases allowing burning.

Besides getting more conservation practices on the ground, another positive aspect of the FSA is the contact that has been generated with producers who have never been cooperators. In Gallatin district, we have 90 new cooperators. Of those, 19 have had some technical assistance previously, but the other 71 are new faces.

As we look ahead, all the plans are to be written by the end of 1989 and there are some who think the job is done. We have heard that expressed during our trips back to Washington, D.C., from people in Office of Management and Budget and even people in Secretary Lyng's office.

We believe the real job is just beginning. Most of what has been done so far is only on paper. Now comes the time to put it in practice. Producers will need ongoing assistance in implementing their plans. We need to make every effort to see they are successful and that the practices developed in their plans are economically feasible and still protect the resource.

By 1995, when all plans are to be applied, we hope a survey of Montana farmers and ranchers will show that they do indeed recognize that soil erosion is a serious problem in Montana. Not only that, but it can potentially be a serious problem on their own land if they don't continually apply the management practices in their conservation plans to keep erosion rates down.

The pendulum swings from one extreme to the other. There was neglect of our resource problems in the past, then in 1985 Congress enacted the FSA and attempted to solve in five years problems that had been developing for years. It is my hope that in the 1990 Farm Bill, Congress will stay the course and just continue on with the 1985 Act. Let's see the results of all this planning in five years. If we haven't done the job by then, it will be time to make changes.



## Bob Martinka

### Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

#### Fish and Wildlife Issues in Montana

The status of wildlife populations on privately-owned agricultural land in Montana is dependent on a number of things, including the land's natural productivity, agricultural economics, land owner attitudes, and the interaction and influence of federal agricultural policies and programs on the land.

In the mid-1950s, the Soil Bank Program was initiated in an attempt to stem increasing farm commodity surpluses and to bolster farm income. This was a voluntary land retirement program that converted crops into permanent undisturbed grasslands. The response of wildlife, especially upland game birds, to the Soil Bank Program was quite dramatic. Numerous studies documented significant increases in the populations of pheasants and other upland game birds.

After the Soil Bank contracts expired, and land was taken out of permanent cover, wildlife populations decreased in many of these areas. Some of the farm programs during the interim decades were actually quite detrimental. In most of the cropland set-aside programs, the majority of the acreages were left unseeded rather than being seeded to cover crops. This practice was not only detrimental to wildlife but, of course, to the soils and other resources that were present in the areas.

In 1985, new farm program legislation with strong conservation provisions was enacted. The conservation programs included in this historic legislation were aimed at correcting excessive soil erosion, enhancing water quality, restoring wildlife habitat and placing agricultural land use on a more sustainable basis. I want to address the wildlife and conservation provisions of the 1985 Act.

From our perspective, the 1985 Farm Bill was one of the most significant pieces of conservation legislation that had been passed in this country in a number of decades. Again, from our perspective, the 1985 Farm Bill contains

four important provisions that affect our wildlife and fishery resources. Two of these, the sodbuster and swampbuster sections, are aimed at protecting existing habitat. The other two, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Farm Debt Restructure and Conservation Easement Sections, are aimed at restoring highly erodible or other farmland back to permanent vegetative cover.

The Conservation Reserve Program has probably the most potential of any of these conservation provisions for impacting and potentially increasing wildlife populations.

We now have about 2.5 million acres of land in the CRP and the latest signup has added somewhere in the neighborhood of 300,000 acres. We don't have any quantitative information at this point about the impacts of CRP on wildlife, other than to say that our biologists and hunters are reporting quite an increase in upland game birds in these CRP fields.

After its initiation, the CRP was expanded to allow vegetative filter strips along streams to qualify for the program. This is significant for water quality and our fishery resources. Another important addition was cropped wetlands that now qualify for CRP without having to meet the erodibility criteria.

The sodbuster/swampbuster and conservation compliance provisions also had varying degrees of direct or indirect benefits to wildlife. Sodbusting in Montana has resulted in significant reductions in antelope and sage grouse populations in a number of areas.

It is important that the swampbuster provision be maintained. The Bush administration has indicated an interest in implementing a national no-net-loss-in-wetlands policy. If this actually occurs, strict enforcement of the swampbuster provision will be an important component.

The conservation compliance provision had many direct and indirect benefits to wildlife through the requirement that conservation plans be developed for highly erodible soils. It is our hope that this provision remain relatively intact as it does benefit our wildlife resources as well as our soil.

Our agency has not been involved to any great extent with the Farm Debt Restructure and Conservation Easement Provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill. We think that these provisions do, however, offer some potential for fish and wildlife.

In conjunction with the passage of the 1985 Farm Bill, our department initiated a complementary program to help private landowners develop wildlife habitat on their lands. Our efforts basically consisted of providing free trees and shrubs to landowners in return for planting permanent cover on their CRP lands. We felt that was more conducive to good wildlife populations. Over the past three years, we have provided about \$120,000 to \$130,000 worth of trees and shrubs to landowners.

In 1989, the Montana legislature enacted legislation that we are excited about. It directs us to implement an Upland Gamebird Habitat Enhancement Program and will provide about \$500,000 a year for habitat enhancement and improvement primarily on private agricultural lands. We hope that portions of this program can be implemented in conjunction with CRP and with some of the other, older farm programs that are now available.

Generally speaking, we are satisfied with the basic content of the conservation provisions as they now exist in the Farm Bill. However, there are a number of areas in which we feel modifications, additions, or perhaps strengthening of the conservation provisions would be useful.

Before I get into the conservation provisions, I'd like to mention one other aspect that could become a conservation provision. The current Farm Commodity Programs contain set-aside requirements that are subject to annual change or modification. Surveys have shown that on these annual set-aside lands, up to 60 percent of them are left unseeded or summer fallowed and nesting cover for wildlife and non-game is either absent or only in poor or fair condition on 80 percent of those lands. A provision should be added to the new farm program, requiring a part of the annual set-aside acreage to be committed to multi-year set-asides. Cost-sharing for the establishment of vegetation on these set-asides should be available.

Now more specifically, the basic CRP program should be considered as is with a few additions. First, field windbreaks and shelterbelts should qualify for CRP without regard to the soil's erosion susceptibility. This would add an important new dimension for wildlife habitat planning and would also aid us in our abilities to implement and make some good use out of our new piece of state legislation, our Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program.

Second, restored wetlands should qualify for CRP. This would aid in achieving the goals of the North American Waterfowl Plan, which is an international effort to stabilize continental waterfowl populations.

Third, we should provide provisions to allow landowners to extend their existing CRP contracts for an additional five years.

Fourth, provisions that allow for haying and grazing on CRP lands during drought conditions should either be tightened or eliminated. These provisions could be shifted to the multi-year set-aside lands that I referred to previously, if that aspect of the farm bill is enacted. These multi-year set-aside lands could then be used to create a strategic forage reserve which would be used specifically for cattle forage during emergency drought situations.

The swampbuster provision should be strengthened and could, perhaps, provide the basis for the formulation for the national wetlands policy. This policy should recognize that wetlands are a unique component of our landscape. Along with this policy, the creation of a national wetlands reserve would be an appropriate national goal. This reserve could or should be the component of the North American Waterfowl Plan.

In closing I'd just like to stress that the Farm Bill has had significant beneficial impact on our wildlife and fishery resources. It is our hope that we can continue on a similar path with the 1990 Farm Program by incorporating a number of the revisions that we have suggested here. We feel these suggestions will improve upon the firm conservation foundation that has already been established.



## Clayton Marlow

*Professor of Range Science*  
Montana State University

### Montana's Range Resources

Nearly 70 percent of Montana is rangeland or grazable woodland. A review of natural resources and conservation indicated that 59 percent of the rangeland and grazable woodland is in good to excellent condition.

Federal land management agencies can be given some of the credit for the accomplishment, but 65 percent of Montana's rangeland is privately owned and much of the improvement in range condition has been brought about through the efforts of ranchers and farmers. Since federal legislation affects Montana's livestock producers and grain farmers, it ultimately affects Montana's rangeland.

Until the mid-80s, total acreage of rangeland in the United States was steadily declining. This trend has been halted due to the CRP program and increased irrigation costs due to the depletion of groundwater reserves in some midwestern and western states. These "new" rangelands add to a growing rangeland problem—weeds.

Weed control on private and public rangelands is a major need that could be addressed in the 1990 Farm Bill. Not only is adequate annual funding necessary, but each of the federal land management agencies should be required to appoint a "weed coordinator" to supervise that agency's efforts to control weeds. Allocation of weed control monies to a single federal agency would be less effective than providing line item allocations to agency weed programs and creating a weed control grants program for state agencies and local conservation districts.

Demands for rangeland products, other than meat and fiber, are increasing rapidly. The 1987 Clean Water Act is one such example. The nation is demanding a higher quality water from rangeland states such as Montana. Although there are some specific research needs for improving management options for rangeland operators, there is an adequate information base to begin to meet the criteria set forth in the 1987 act. To implement these initial

efforts private landowners will need technical assistance from agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service. Consequently, the 1990 Farm Bill should contain funding authorization for personnel and travel that will allow these agencies to meet this growing need.

---

## Jon Doggett

*Agriculture Representative*  
Rep. Ron Marlenee

### Washington, D. C. Update

I'm a fourth generation Montanan and my family's been involved in the livestock industry for five generations in the state.

One of the big workloads we're looking forward to is the debate over the 1990 Farm Bill. It's going to be a long and involved process, and as a senior member of the House Committee on Agriculture, Congressman Marlenee is going to be heavily involved in the legislation.

Ron has attended field hearings in various parts of the country. He has been in Pueblo, Colorado, and Pendleton, Oregon, for similar hearings. He's asked other members of the House Agriculture Committee to join him for a field hearing here in Montana.

There are a lot of different views on how the United States should conduct its farm programs. It's complicated because we have so many different commodities and programs—the sugar program, and the wool program, and the various grain programs. It's a difficult bill to put together.

Kenny Noland, Cliff Humphrey, and myself are available for discussions with you. I know that I've talked to a lot of you folks and you have some opinions about what you'd like to see in the bill or what you would not like to see in the bill. The staff passes these comments on to Ron. He reads all his constituent mail and he's especially interested in any constituent mail regarding farm programs. He's a farmer himself and realizes the importance of the issue to the state. He's committed to having a good farm bill and he welcomes your comments, so I'm glad to be here today to listen to what you folks have to say.

## Interest Groups

### Alternative Energy Resource Organization

*Tom Elliott*  
Chairperson

The Alternative Energy Resources Organization is a statewide nonprofit group which serves a growing number of farmers and ranchers who are seeking to optimize the use of on-farm resources and minimize the use of production items and practices with few adverse impacts on human health and environment. While we're doing this, we are trying to maintain acceptable levels of production and profit from our operations. We have some specific suggestions from our farmer membership for your review of federal farm policy over the forthcoming months.

We would like to see laws enacted which would prohibit the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation and the companies that it reinsures from limiting or refusing insurance, denying payments, or reducing yields solely on the basis of a producer's utilization of low input sustainable farming practices.

We would like to see the Secretary of Agriculture directed to conduct a study and issue a report on the crop insurance needs of producers using low input sustainable systems and to suggest options for ways to alter or supplement federal crop insurance to meet those needs.

We would like to see the FCIC prohibited from substantially increasing premiums for sustainable farming practices as it currently does for a wheat crop. We would like to require the USDA agencies create regionally applicable low input sustainable agriculture technical guides, including information on crop selection, crop plant varieties, rotation practices, tillage systems, nutrient management, soil fertility and productivity, pest, weed, and disease management, water conservation and livestock management. We also support funding to promote research and to promote application of these regenerative agricultural techniques.

We would also like to expand the eligible purposes for operating loans to include financing for costs, incident to converting to low input sustainable systems and to achieving compliance with conservation requirements.

We urge this congressional delegation to look seriously at base acreage protection, volume control, multi-year set-asides and a range of other incentives for us to make our agriculture more ecologically sustainable.

We're victims of our own arrogance here. We presume that we can understand and control the process of agriculture, but the very best we can do is assist and collaborate with this mystery that we call nature, that we call agriculture. Even the term steward implies that we own something. It's a certain arrogant attitude. We're not owners of the land, we're part of it, we come from it, we go back to it. As a result of this arrogance, as a result of the policies that have stemmed from this arrogance, we're living on the edge of a knife today. That's why your work is so incredibly important right now.

You've got to develop a farm bill that both coheres and endures. We've got to see legislation that reduces depletion of non-renewable resources. We've got to encourage farm research and farm practices that don't further degrade the environment and that enhance rural communities and our rural income. We've got to protect the national food supply and the business interest of our farmers. We have to do it in the context of a greater economy. That is the economy of the earth—the debits and credits that exist between people, animals, and plants; the spreadsheet that includes soil, water, and rural communities.

We urge you to consider those bills introduced by Senator Fowler and Senator Luber. We need to incorporate language that accepts the process of agriculture. Your legislation has to support a profound and fundamental shift from the devastating mentality of a consumptive industrial agriculture of which we've all been a part to that of a balanced and sustainable agriculture that supports the people involved in it and operates within the limits imposed by our earth.



## Farm Bureau

**Andy Neal**

Executive Vice President

The Montana Farm Bureau supports the direction of the 1985 Food Security Act. We are opposed to modifications in the program that would change the direction away from market-oriented goals of competitive loan rates, voluntary stock reduction and income supplements as we move toward a market-based agriculture. We feel very strongly that the 1985 Act has worked well and we should continue in the same direction.

Farm Bureau is opposed to any type of mandatory production, acreage control or marketing quotas. Programs that require production or marketing controls will destroy farm exports.

As we consider the 1990 program, we should consider the following areas:

- Deficiency payments should be determined by using the first 5 months of the year. Prompt payment should be made following the calculation.
- Producers should be allowed to interchange base acres among program crops as long as crop base is not increased more than 10% and deficiency payments are not increased.
- Storage payment should be equivalent to producers as they go to commercial warehouses.
- Deficiency payments should not be reduced or crop bases adjusted because plantings were less than permitted.
- The 0-92 program and guaranteed minimum deficiency payments should be made on the full 92 percent.
- Payment limitations under the commodity loan acreage reduction and disaster programs should be eliminated.
- Program crop policies should not be developed at the expense of nonprogram crops and other commodities.
- We oppose the farmer-owned grain reserve. It should be replaced by noninterest loans to wheat and feed grain producers over a nine month period.

The following are what government programs should do for agriculture:

- Help farmers obtain needed crop and market information, research, credit, and educational assistance.
- Provide workable grade and standards and safeguard quality through inspection services.
- Help farmers eradicate or control plant and animal pests and diseases.
- Encourage conservation of land and water resources.
- Promote reliable transportation for agricultural commodities.
- Strengthen farmers' power to bargain for a price.
- Reduce the five-acre set-aside requirement to one acre and not necessarily contiguous.
- Farm program announcements should be made as directed by FSA, and once announced, not changed.
- We support continued adequate funding of ASCS.
- We oppose strict cross compliance; limited cross compliance should be at the discretion of the secretary of agriculture.

We also believe that conservation compliance provisions should be modified to recognize economic and technical feasibility, traditional or normal farming practices, and local conditions. The SCS technical guide should be just that, a guide, not mandatory.

### Sodbuster and Swampbuster

We oppose farm program incentives that stimulate producers to bring fragile lands under cultivation. Any producer allowing such practice shall be ineligible for federal incentive payments for any crop in his farming operation.

### Conservation Reserve Program

We support the concept of CRP to improve soil and water resources. The program should include whole farm set-aside with protection of tenant-farmers' rights. We oppose producers being eligible to participate in the CRP who break up fragile land after the CRP contract has been accepted by USDA.

Again, we support the direction of the 1985 Farm Bill, and would push for some of these minor changes to improve and strengthen the act that is in place. The program has worked reasonably well and we feel these suggestions may further enhance the 1990 legislation.



## Farmers Union

**Ken Siroky**

Member, Board of Directors

If you're a baseball fan, you're probably familiar with the legendary double play combination of Tinker to Evers to Chance. These three gentlemen made the relay of a baseball into a virtual art form and became the subject of poetry.

The relay of philosophical bunk that has passed from Secretaries of Agriculture Benson to Butz to Yeutter and expressed in excess production to create the double whammy of low prices and free trade is a debacle.

Low prices and free trade are basic cornerstones to economic policy that favor the efficiency of volume over the efficiency of competition. This means driving people out of agriculture in a style that makes the Great Cattle Drive of 1989 pale in comparison. Economics is the pivot on which issues great and small turn.

Conservation of soil and water is no less a victim than people as the consequences of the 1985 Farm Act and its predecessors are realized. It is naive to consider issues as single entities but rather they should be regarded in the context of related interests. Good soil and water conservation, for instance, must be a partner to good animal husbandry, good agronomic practices, energy conservation, and chemical waste and residue responsibilities. It must also mesh with desirable human needs, both social and physical. A good economic underpinning will provide balanced favorable results in these areas and others.

The 1985 Farm Act does none of this.

The sometimes lauded benefits to conservation and wildlife by the farm bill through CRP are illusionary. The program itself is a knee-jerk reaction to previous farm bills and economic policy that went further awry than intended and should not have happened in the first place. It is something akin to the Chinese practice of sending a bill for the bullet used in an execution to the victim's family. When the U.S. Department of Agriculture commits an

atrocious it sends the bill for the mess to the taxpayer, and no, I don't think the analogy is too dramatic. CRP is merely damage control and not constructive in any other sense. It is corrupting and bankrupting. The government is renting land per year for more than it is worth, affecting neighbors adversely, and creating untold loopholes for abuse. CRP is fertile ground for political maneuvering and moving people off the land, probably never to return.

Some questions we must ponder are: Is borderline bribery for the benefit of conservation the message we want to send through CRP? Are the wildlife benefits of CRP compromised by drought year haying and grazing? Drought years are exactly the conditions under which wildlife would need additional feed and cover provided by CRP land. Is conservation better served by producers making a living from the farm than from a government check? Is the last bastion of the work ethic endangered by interrupting the flow of many farms from one generation to the next with government payments?

To discover the true impact of the 1985 Farm Act and its predecessors on conservation, we have to evaluate the effects its economic policy has on the way people in agriculture conduct themselves.

As the free trade, cheap food policy continues to depress prices and make farmers and ranchers live at a level below other Americans, they react in predictable ways. They pursue a relentless search for economic equality through the volume efficiency game. Results of this quest include larger farms, larger equipment, more chemicals, larger cattle herds, increased specialization, etc. Producers playing the game of catch up found they couldn't and more and more drastic measures are necessary. They find themselves farming a deeper coulee and a steeper slope. Bigger machinery makes it impractical and uneconomic to preserve a waterway, farm in narrow strips on the contour or tolerate shelterbelts leftover from the repair of similar disasters from the past. The monoculture of specialization lends itself to chemical abuse. Livestock people respond by overgrazing and overcrowding, resulting in damage

to the land and husbandry problems. Lastly, the 1985 Farm Act is dictatorial. It is voluntary, but one can't afford not to volunteer. Part of the volunteering is a mandatory conservation plan. Ultimately, conservation, like morality, cannot be legislated. The owner must have the genuine desire to do the right thing, and he must also have the economic resources to carry out those desires without hardship.

As an alternative, Montana Farmers Union favors a bushel quota system to replace the acreage system now used. Under the quota system a bushel allotment would be given to each producer based on the farm's history record, and would allow for the marketing of that amount. The cumulative quota should reflect the needs of the domestic market, profitable foreign trade market and charity needs. The ability to match need with supply and insulate surplus from the market would bring the agriculture economy to a par with the rest of the nation. Prices reflecting the true value of the raw materials would bring about their best and most efficient use.

The balance of supply, demand, and the accompanying price are essential ingredients of good conservation. The effect of this balance on producers would be to encourage the cultural use of only the most suitable acres, find alternative uses for the more marginal acres, and have the funds to do so. The key is to remove the obsession to produce more and more at a lower and lower price. Other benefits include less chemical and energy use, but probably the most important benefit is the conservation of human resources by a renewal of the spirit and soul of rural America. This, after all, is the bottom line to soil and water conservation and the most glaring deficiency in the current farm act.

The Farm Act of 1985 created through surplus an imbalance between land and people that makes their relationship an adversarial one and is not conducive to the well-being of either. Blame for the virtual mining of the topsoil of this country can be traced directly to the Food Security Act of 1985, thereby making the word security devoid of meaning.

For the benefit of the land and the people who live because of it, the relationship must be

symbiotic. That symbiosis would best be exemplified by a conservation ethic that is a free choice and not a mandated one. Free choice conservation is the product of a balance between the value of produce from the land and the remainder of the economy.

That is the practical goal and anything less as embodied by the Food Security Act of 1985 or its extension should not be tolerated.

---

## Fort Peck Tribes

*Debi Madison*

Environmental Engineer

As a reservation comprised of 2.1 million acres of mostly agricultural lands, the Fort Peck Tribes have a keen interest in the 1990 Farm Bill. Over half of the \$5.4 million annual tribal budget is derived from its agricultural resource. If you think it's hard operating a business on your land, try running a government.

Currently, the tribes have enrolled acreage in the Conservation Reserve Program based on a share percentage with the operator. This was not, however, an easy process. Questions immediately rose as to how to treat a tribe. For instance: How are farm units determined? Can each tribal member be a unit, or each councilman or can only the tribe's land as a whole be considered as one unit? Can the tribe enroll land into CRP on its own? These questions required several weeks of letter writing, waiting for responses, etc. Finally, the tribes and leasors were allowed to enter highly erodible lands into the CRP.

This exercise raised other questions, specifically, is a farm plan required for the tribes on unleased tracts and, if so, how will it be implemented? Also, on LTA (long-term agreement) projects, how much cost-share can the tribe apply for? Another unit question.

The tribes believe that a specific policy needs to be developed by the Soil Conservation Service/ Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service so that these questions could be easily answered at the local level. The Roosevelt County Conservation District has done an outstanding



job developing a farm plan for the Fort Peck Tribes, but still has questions regarding its implementation. Development of an overall "Indian policy" would aid local decision makers and planners.

Addressing the CRP title as a whole, the tribes endorse an increase in allowable acreage. The tribes have seen a substantial increase in upland game bird population as well as small game. However, the tribes believe that limited grazing and haying would be an appropriate attraction to the CRP regulations. Benefits from this action would be ecological as well as economical.

Groundwater contamination is a major concern for the tribes. High sodium levels as well as high nitrate levels in groundwater can be found within the reservation boundaries. Although some high sodium levels are naturally occurring, high nitrate levels are almost always directly attributed to agricultural practices. The legislators from farm states, operators, and business sector must address this problem themselves as a whole or someone outside the agricultural community will address it for us.

## Grain Growers Association

*Larry Johnson*  
President

The Montana Grain Growers Association continues to support the basic concepts of the 1985 Food Security Act and believes the 1990 Farm Bill should carry on these concepts. Voluntary acreage reduction to keep supply and demand balanced, an aggressive export program, income support through a target price system, and adjusted loan rates significantly below world market prices should all be incorporated in the 1990 farm legislation.

The 1985 Act, while expensive, has been very successful. Ag exports are up, stocks are down, prices are stronger and the financial condition of most farmers has improved. However, times and conditions have changed. Some modifications must be made to the 1985 Act to keep it effective.

The 1990 Farm Bill must perform a fragile balancing act. It must balance supply with

demand, give U.S. farmers the ability to meet the demands of our customers while not producing excesses that depress prices, provide commodity prices that stabilize farmers' income yet do not stimulate new production in non-traditional areas, help in reducing this country's budget deficit but in a way that does not erode agriculture income and require a massive bailout later, and address food safety and environmental issues while not reducing the productivity and efficiency of our producers.

Eventually an open and free market could accomplish all these things. However, world agriculture policy does not allow that to happen today. We need to devise fragile ag policy in the United States that allows U.S. farmers to be a productive and effective segment of our economy. With that in mind, the MGGA would make the following suggestions:

**Target Prices:** The 1990 Farm Bill should be used to review and examine target prices. Target prices should be well balanced, reflecting relative value and cost of production of the various commodities so that one commodity is not favored over another. If one commodity is supported to a larger degree than another, farmers are encouraged to produce for the "farm program" rather than the market. It should be a priority of this farm bill to correct those inequities and assure that target prices, which are a "cornerstone" of current ag policy, are accurate and reflect a reasonable balance between commodities.

MGGA believes that target prices on most commodities have been reduced as far as possible and should not be further reduced in the 1990 Act. Further reduction would only erode producer income support and participation in commodity programs. While target price reductions are an easy source of USDA budget savings, they should be resisted. Rather, we should look to judicious management of acreage set-aside programs (ARP) and aggressive use of the Export Enhancement Program to reduce budget exposure. If supply of grains in the United States are kept at reasonable levels, prices can be maintained at a level where deficiency payments are eliminated or minimized.

This brings up the question of what "reasonable supplies" are. Currently, USDA is projecting ending wheat stocks next May 31 at 474 million bushels. Secretary Yeutter has been quoted as saying wheat stocks are "dangerously low" and the USDA is in a panic looking at different means of increasing wheat plantings next year. We do not believe that stocks in the 500 million bushel range are unreasonably low. We are not in danger of running out of wheat. The United States does not need to feel responsible for storing the world grain surplus.

While MGGA and all farmers look forward to a time when prices and income are created by the market place, that, in large, is not happening now. We do not believe that we need to give anything away at this time. Unless and until other countries are willing to take responsible action to reduce ag subsidies, we need to maintain and utilize all the tools we have to force them to the bargaining table.

Target prices should not be lowered. Rather, the ARP and the EEP should be used to minimize deficiency payments and the resulting budget exposure.

**Export Enhancement Program:** The EEP cannot be overemphasized. As long as the United States is fighting a subsidy war, we must continue an aggressive export sales and market development program. EEP has proven to be very effective in expanding sales and bringing our competitors to the bargaining table.

**Planting Flexibility:** One of the major changes needed in ag policy is flexibility. Current programs have made base acres an extremely valuable asset. Producers do not necessarily raise their commodities because it makes economic sense, but because they have to in order to maintain base acres. We need to be able to shift acreage to other program crops that are in short supply. More importantly, we need to be able to shift to non-program crops that are in short supply or in the process of expanding markets. We need greater freedom to respond to market signals.

This flexibility could be achieved by either using a Normal Crop Acreage (NCA) base or by allowing producers to plant alternate crops on

base acres without the danger of losing base acres. We do not favor the "triple-base" concept. It is simply a means of cutting target prices.

**Long-term Set-Aside:** One of the new concepts that MGGA would like to examine is that of a long-term set-aside. There are many cases where it would be helpful for a producer to be able to set-aside the same field or acreage for several years. Currently, that is not possible. In order to be eligible for conserving use (CU), ground must be planted to a program crop in two of the last five years.

Montana has a growing saline seep problem. If a producer could set-aside land that is causing a saline seep problem for five years and have that qualify for CU, he may be able to take steps to cure the problem. Saline seep is a major cause of water quality problems in Montana and this concept could go a long way in curbing it. It could also be helpful in cases where noxious weeds or other land management conditions are a problem. We would suggest a maximum of five years and 5 percent of base for the long-term set-aside. We are not looking for an expanded CRP program, but rather a set-aside that will allow us to manage some of our cultural and environmental problems.

**Federal Crop Insurance Program:** The MGGA urges Congress to take a good look at the Federal Crop Insurance Program. We need to improve this system so that it covers all crops in a way that it is not necessary to write disaster legislation each year. Although disaster legislation these past two years has been extremely helpful to U.S. farmers, we need to know before we plant the degree to which we can protect our investments.

We urge the Congress to take time to carefully assess the FCIC program and incorporate constructive improvements into the 1990 Farm Bill. We do not want to be "bailed out" each time it rains too little or too much, but we do want to be able to ensure our investments on all crops against weather extremes.

**Paperwork Reduction:** The paperwork required by ASCS and CCC is excessive and cumbersome and we encourage Congress to take a



serious look at Congressman Marlenee's Agricultural Program Reporting and Recordkeeping Improvement Act of 1989, HR802. Surely, if a concerted effort is made to study the various forms we are required to fill out to comply with commodity and conservation programs, some reductions and simplifications could be made.

MGGA is also excited about the possibility of using our computers to access USDA-ASCS computers. A large percentage of us utilize computers and it would be a great help if we could access the SCS computer network not only for program and other information, but to actually sign up for commodity programs from our office on the farm. Many of us travel as far as 70 to 80 miles to stand in line at ASCS offices only to be told we need "one more form or signature."

**Environmental Issues:** Certainly, one of the major concerns of the 1990 Farm Bill will be environmental issues as they relate to production agriculture. Our organization is sensitive to the problems and potential problems that agriculture has created for our environment and believes that we must take an active role in solving them.

Montana and many states have responded to the water quality issue by implementing ground water protection laws. In our state, that law was the product of compromise between agribusiness, producers and environmentalists. We believe it is a good law and will go a long way in beginning the fight to protect the quality of our water.

Yes, we do have environmental problems in agriculture. We admit that. We only ask that Congress and others come to producers when they are seeking workable answers to environmental problems.

**Low Input Sustainable Agriculture:** The buzzword on Capitol Hill and in many circles today is LISA. Many seem to believe that it's a new word and new concept that will revolutionize U.S. agriculture.

Let me tell you that Montana producers already practice Low Input Sustainable Agriculture. We

do not purchase chemical and fertilizer inputs because they are fun to buy, but we purchase them when they make our operations more efficient and our commodities a better product. Certainly, we would like a wheat plant that produced its own fertilizer, was resistant to the Russian Wheat Aphid, and emitted natural toxins that kept weeds from our fields.

If there are production inputs with known adverse impacts on human health or the environment, we want to be the first to say we should be working to get rid of them. However, we will resist any attempts to make U.S. agriculture less efficient and competitive because some urban intellectual believes it would be "neat" to see an agriculture that reverted back to the days of the horse and plow with farm children pulling weeds and farm wives spreading manure.

---

## Montana Association of Conservation Districts

*Peggy Robles*

Executive Vice President

MACD represents the 59 conservation districts in Montana and the over 500 men and women who serve as district supervisors.

The 1985 Farm Bill has increased the workload for both the Soil Conservation Service and conservation districts. Both of these agencies agree that voluntary compliance is more effective. The conservation district supervisors approve the plans developed by SCS, and to date there have been very few appeals. Changes in the requirements for farm plans has definitely made the program more palatable to farmers and ranchers. We support the concept of looking at management practices on a case-by-case, crop-by-crop basis. The ability to be flexible in planning is important.

The Conservation Reserve Program has been very popular in Montana. Montana had 3.5 million acres goaled for CRP and 2.8 million acres have been bid in to date. That means 32 million tons of soil saved each year.



Farming and ranching is important to Montana's economy and to the food supply of Montana, our nation, and the world. Farmers would like to depend on selling their grain on the open market at a profit each year. But there is a need for some sort of base price or price protection to ensure that the majority of farmers and ranchers can stay in business. If we are going to depend upon a cheap and abundant food supply for the world, we think some measure of crop price guarantees are in order.

CRP is also working as a whole to reduce grain production. It is working to provide price support with a reduced supply along with protecting some of our more fragile cropland from erosion.

CRP is also increasing wildlife. This increase in wildlife doesn't mean that there is more game damage. CRP acres are supplying more forage by improving wildlife habitat. CRP has also increased the awareness of good conservation.

Although CRP has been effective, we have a few items we would like considered in the 1990 Farm Bill.

The present CRP program was originally designed for lands that should not have been farmed in the first place. There has been a lot of discussion that the farmer who was already doing a good job of protecting the resource, or not farming highly erodible land, could not qualify for the program. Many people looked on it as a program that paid a support to some who had not been good stewards of the land.

CRP is a contract and that contract shouldn't be changed every time there is a problem. Weeds should be controlled and haying or grazing should not be allowed on CRP acres. Proper management will keep the land productive. This may require cutting or some other practice, but many people believe we should not deviate from the contract.

It may be beneficial to have local officials who are familiar with local problems, soils, and people involved more in making decisions on regulations. Quit the policy of changing the "rules." It is confusing to both the agencies and the landowners.

Districts also believe all highly erodible lands should qualify for CRP, even if the land did not have a cropping history.

Montana soil surveys need to be continued. We also need for the old surveys to correlate with the new surveys so there is continuity.

We encourage the continued funding of the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) and the Great Plains Conservation Program (GPCP). The ACP program in Montana has increased water saving practices, contributed to better range management, and helped control weeds. The GPCP is a tool for complete natural resource planning. Through GPCP, the entire picture is looked at—rangeland management, no-till, irrigation, soil erosion control, water quality, and other practices.

Agricultural research stations should be funded well. Research is important for crop production, water quality, and erosion control. We are seeing a decrease in available funding, which is hurting research.

We would like to see changes in the saline seep reclamation. We would favor some special practice that would allow a producer to treat grain cropland for a saline seep problem without losing the grain base acres that are seeded to a crop such as alfalfa. We believe producers should be encouraged and assisted in treating saline seep areas in order to increase their productivity while improving ground and surface water. We are supportive of SCS's goal to do aerial photography of wetlands, as this will give us a more accurate accounting of the number of acres affected by saline seep.

The weed problem in Montana is no small problem. We need funding to cost share for control of weeds and for research into biological methods of control. Some of the herbicides that are most effective in controlling weeds are becoming suspect to contributing to both groundwater and surface water pollution. These problems need to be look at closely.

MACD recommends that the 1990 Farm Bill not contain any major modifications to the 1985 Food Security Act.

## Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (Water Quality Bureau)

**Jack Thomas**  
Environmental Specialist

Much of the talk during the day has directly or indirectly pertained to water quality and the management of our resources to protect and improve the quality of both surface water and groundwater.

The big emphasis during the past decade and particularly the last couple years has been on non-point sources of pollution as regulatory programs have largely eliminated or controlled point source pollution.

In Montana, agriculture has been credited with producing nearly half of all the surface water non-point source pollution as reported in the Water Quality Bureau's 1988 non-point source assessment report.

Admittedly, that figure is likely inaccurate now as the support data for the figure is nearly five years old. Since that time significant changes have been made.

Most notably, the 1985 Farm Bill contained provisions that benefitted water quality in Montana.

The Conservation Reserve Program put many acres of erodible land that were contributing large amounts of sediment to the state's waters into permanent vegetative cover.

Both the sodbuster and the swampbuster provisions helped improve water quality as well.

Another important piece of federal legislation that has the potential to impact water quality management and non-point source pollution control came with the passage of the 1987 Clean Water Act, specifically Section 319.

Section 319 required each state to assess non-point source impacts to state waters and

develop a non-point source management program to address those identified problems with the promise of federal funding to assist in that effort.

The Water Quality Bureau, with assistance from DNRC, SCS, and conservation districts, produced an assessment report and management program and submitted both to the EPA August 4, 1988.

The state received approval of the assessment report and parts of the management program in April of this year. Our agricultural section of the management plan was approved in June.

Our program proposes the voluntary application of best management practices and resource management systems through demonstration projects, educational programs, and by providing financial incentives to landowners to implement specified best management practices.

To accomplish the objectives of the program we need funding. Four hundred million dollars was authorized in Section 319 to be allocated to the states over a four-year period beginning in 1987, but none has been appropriated to date.

The lack of federal funding to support a program that was federally mandated to the states has hindered our efforts to secure funding from nonfederal sources.

We have hope that an appropriation is forthcoming during the next fiscal year so that our program can proceed as planned.

Continuation of the CRP program and other beneficial provisions of the 85 Farm Bill in the 1990 bill and the possible addition of water quality protection and improvement provisions will go far toward accomplishing the non-point source pollution control goals we have set.

A strong farm bill coupled with efforts to supply adequate funding under Section 319 will vastly improve water quality in this state.



## Montana Salinity Control Association

*Jane Holzer*  
Program Director

The Montana Salinity Control Association is a program that represents 33 conservation districts in eastern Montana counties. We'd like the farm program to move more toward a conservation-oriented or incentive-based program and away from production subsidies.

Salinity results in the loss of cropland and production. This problem affects over 300,000 acres in Montana and is important to individuals with damaged land. On a national scale, salinity is not as large a problem. However, the slow degradation of the groundwater and surface water problems in the Northern Great Plains are beginning to affect the public at large, as well as downstream users. I think that is why we'll get more attention on salinity control.

The answer to salinity control is to build perennial crop rotations into the farm program so that producers will be willing to adopt, and never be penalized later for having forages in their rotations. We need the long-term forage rotation because of the extended growing season. Forages grow early in the spring and throughout the season into the fall when none of the other annual crops will do that. Also, forages are deeper rooted, therefore, use more soil water and all the annual precipitation.

There are two major problems with having just a voluntary salinity control program. The first one is that with forages and other alternative crops operators have limited or reduced income. Since there are no subsidies either and usually no disaster payments, they're dependent on a cash crop and become reluctant to incorporate them into their normal rotation. There are some things you might want to address in the farm bill. One would be to add some program benefits and/or a subsidy to those crops or perhaps lower the subsidy for grain so that they become more economically competitive. We'd like to see development of markets for forage crops and our alternative crops. We'd like to see research into the adapt-

ability of alternative crops such as canola, sunflowers, and the annual legumes. There are limited research funds to address those at this time, but we certainly have the need for it. Many times when we need answers to those things, we have to go to our Canadian neighbors.

We'd also like to see a continuity from one farm program to the next. There is a fear among landowners that they will lose their cropping base if they put land into a long-term forage program.

We also have a problem with land ownership between recharge area and discharge areas. When the individual owns only the recharge area and not the discharge area, there is no incentive for him to protect the water resource nor reclaim his neighbor's saline seep. We'd like to work with you to develop incentives so they'd be willing to adopt those programs. Will it become a carrot or a stick for non point source pollution? We need voluntary incentive programs versus regulatory or punitive programs.

You might consider changes in the CRP program. Perhaps a shorter contract period, maybe five to six years, would allow more flexibility. It would be easier to rotate small acreages of crops. It could help with the stagnation problem of the introduced species that we are concerned about on CRP land as well as the weeds, diseases, and insects. We'd also be interested in managed CRP programs, perhaps to allow limited grazing or haying and then have a smaller annual payment. An example would be winter grazing, or haying in years that you have excess or abundant growth because that's when the stagnation problem would occur. Introduced species that are not clipped occasionally will not use all the moisture that is available. We would encourage deep-rooted legumes in CRP seed mixtures. Since legumes require more management, there might be higher payments for managing them.

We would suggest there be higher CRP payments for restoration of wetlands. These wetlands are important because they are often discharge areas for saline seeps when farmed. They provide excellent wildlife habitat and are

an issue with water quality. Because they're higher-producing cropland, the operator will require a higher incentive payment to convert them from cropland.

We'd also like to see CRP address other resource problems. One example is water quality. A suggestion we've made through the conservation districts to the national office of the Soil Conservation Service is that recharge areas for saline seep be eligible for CRP, whether or not they're highly erodible. That has not been approved at this point. The recharge areas should also be addressed because you'd only have a marginal stand if only the discharge area is seeded. At the end of the ten-year period you would not have addressed the real problem of salinity.

Some other ideas that might be of interest would be having the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Services develop new programs for water quality and update existing Agricultural Conservation Program cost-share policies. The example being Special Practice 35 (SP-35) for the investigation and control of saline seep. We'd like to see the cost-share level for Special Practice 35 match or be very close to that of the Great Plains Program for saline seep, which is toxic salt reduction cost-share for recharge areas.

ASCS is just starting to cost-share water quality special projects (WQSP). This provides an excellent opportunity to address nonpoint source pollution problems and capitalize on the Clean Water Act (Section 319) emphasis on water quality. WQSP will provide an incentive for individuals to investigate their salinity problems and then implement reclamation systems. We could design these systems to address the multiple land ownerships and large watersheds where many individuals have recharge areas, but do not have the salinity. Under the ACP Special Practice 35 program, they may not qualify for any or adequate cost share. And more and more as we work with the salinity program, we see fewer people that control both the recharge and discharge area.

Public benefits from salinity control include improvement of water quality, wildlife habitat,

weed control, and less damage to infrastructure. There are many public dollars being spent to rebuild roads and repair damage as a result of salinity. Last, but not least, is the tax base which would be protected. Currently individuals can reduce their state taxes if it's considered marginal land.

We need incentive-based conservation practices in the farm bill because the quick and occasional solutions do not work for water quality problems. The key for salinity control is prevention. Reclamation is often too late, too costly, and takes too long.

---

## Montana Salinity Control Association

*Pete Purvis*  
Supervisor

CRP contracts are ten-year contracts. Some of them are in their fourth year already and in six years some of them will be running out. The 1990 Farm Program should address now what's going to happen to these contracts at the end of the ten years. It's time the farmers and the rural people had some kind of an idea what was going to happen with the CRP contracts when they terminate.

Perhaps we could have some limited grazing at a reduced payment rate on CRP, probably seasonal grazing. In Montana this would probably work during the winter months, especially when you have crop disasters such as we had last year. The protection of rural communities and small towns should be in the next farm bill.

We urge you to not write a whole new farm program, but to build on the 1985 Farm Bill. It took about three years to implement and interpret the last one. I don't think we should start all over with a brand new one now. We should refine the one we've got and go from there.



## Montana State University

**Dr. James Welsh**

Dean and Director, College of  
Agriculture, Agricultural Experiment  
Station, Extension Service

As I listened to the presentations from various agricultural organizations and interests, I've been impressed with the number of different issues that have been presented to you as challenges in the next farm bill. The list includes: saline seep, erosion, water quality, weed control, bio-control, resource databases, cropping practices, alternative crops, biology, exports, food quality and safety, environmental issues, value-added, less intensive agriculture, low-input sustainable agriculture (LISA) and many more. I considered the list and noted that the common thread running through all items is the serious, urgent need for legitimate, sound data and information appropriate to address each issue. I represent a university system, more specifically, Montana State University, but even more specifically, the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Extension Service as legitimate mechanisms to provide databases, information and the educational process necessary to address these issues.

I was particularly interested in comments relative to Senator Baucus' interest in the weed control issue and the concern about leafy spurge, knapweed and other weed species tending to seriously impact Montana at the moment. I recognize that legislation is important to address these issues, but I think it is safe to say that the resolution to these issues will rest in technology and science and the ability to manage these species in a reasonable fashion. I call your attention to the BioScience Building project that has a major component of bio-control systems which, I think, address some of the issues we're concerned about. It seems to be reasonably difficult for us, particularly in the Great Plains area and in Montana, to be successful in attracting regional and national programs and support for programs that have interest, importance, and impact beyond the boundaries of Montana.

I strongly believe that it's necessary to take a look at the level of investment and support

being provided at the state and federal levels for the research system, primarily through the USDA Cooperative States Research Service through the state experiment stations, the Agricultural Research Service and the Cooperative Extension Service. These are organizations capable of bringing appropriate and unbiased information to the decision-making process as we look at the list of problems facing us in the upcoming years, particularly as they may be impacted by the farm bill.

As we look at the federal legislation associated with the next farm bill, there is authorization to support the Extension Service, the State Experiment Stations and the Agricultural Research Service to address issues such as we have on the agenda today. It makes sense to reinforce that state/federal partnership for the development of technology and educational process if we're to be successful in making this great slice of the United States called the Great Plains viable—socially viable, environmentally viable, and economically viable.

My message is to request that you keep the research and educational components of the farm bill in mind as outstanding investments in the future of this country.

## Montana State University

**Jim Johnson**

Extension Agriculture Economist

With one out of every seven cropland acres in Montana in CRP, CRP is a major Montana agricultural enterprise. In recognizing that we thought we should have a better understanding as to what was happening to farms because of CRP, and some of CRP's effects on the state's economy.

The average age of a Montana farmer with land in CRP is 53. It's probably not a retirement program because the average age of all Montana farmers is 51. Fifty-five percent, however, of all farms that have one or more CRP contracts are managed by farmer-managers who are 55 or older. The average Montana farm participating in CRP has signed up 30 percent of its cropland into the program. Farm manag-



ers with land in CRP who are 65 or older, 25 percent have signed all of their cropland into CRP. About 40 percent of the Montana farms with CRP have signed 50 percent or more of their cropland in to the CRP. In terms of base reduction, for every acre of CRP in Montana there is an average aggregate base reduction, mainly wheat and barley, of .6 of an acre.

Many thought that farm managers who put land in the CRP would try to acquire additional cropland to manage and farm. But 4 percent of those with CRP contracts in Montana had leased or purchased additional cropland to manage.

Of those farms with land in CRP, only 8 percent sold any farm machinery. Of those farms that put all of their cropland in the CRP, only 13 percent sold any machinery.

In terms of the labor of the farm manager himself, of 30 percent who had been previously employed off-farm and enrolled part of their land in CRP, 11 percent increased their employment after putting land in CRP and almost an equal percentage, 9 percent, decreased their employment. Of those who had not had any off-farm employment prior to CRP, only 4.5 percent obtained off-farm employment subsequent to CRP enrollment.

One of the popular allegations about the CRP is that as funds become available through the program, farmers will intensify their production on their remaining cropland. Of those farms which had several CRP contracts, only 6 percent reported that they increased their per acre use of fertilizer on their remaining cropland.

In terms of the future intentions of people who have cropland under CRP, 94 percent indicated that they were retaining all their cropland throughout the ten-year CRP contract period. Only about 1 1/2 to 2 percent indicated that they were not retaining their cropland in CRP. The presumption there would be that they would sell up or otherwise dispose of it. In terms of debt payment, 50 percent of those farms receiving CRP payments indicated they would use part of their payment for debt

payment or debt retirement. Fifty-six percent also indicated they would use a portion of their CRP payment for operating capital. Forty-five percent indicate they would use part of their CRP payment for living expenses, and 29 percent said they would use part of their CRP payment for other investments.

There was a lot of concern expressed about people taking their CRP payments and spending the money outside their usual trade area. Ninety-two percent reported there would be no change in their spending levels outside of their usual trade area. Five percent reported they would increase their spending outside their trade area.

These preliminary estimates were based on a random sample of Montana farm managers with CRP contracts through the end of the six signups. This represents the total entities of 511 farm managers. The usable sample was approximately 325 farms.

---

## Montana Stockgrowers Association

*Jimmie Wilson*

Spokesman on Agricultural Policy

I represent the Montana Stockgrowers Association as its spokesman on agriculture policy, and I am a cattle rancher from western Montana.

The cattle industry is the largest segment of Montana agriculture based to cash receipts. Throughout the history of Montana and the nation, the American beef industry has played an integral role in the economy of our country.

In the past cattlemen were accused of being negligent of agriculture as a whole. In 1984, we became involved in drafting the 1985 Farm Bill. We were the "new boys on the block," but we became involved in issues critical to the cattle industry. The following are some of the issues important to the association.

**Feedgrains:** The payment-in-kind (PIK) program aided one segment of agriculture at the expense of the cattlemen. Market-oriented grain

policy was perhaps the most important policy change for the cattle industry included in the 1985 act.

**Beef Promotion:** The beef check-off has helped the cattle industry tell the story of how nutrient-rich beef benefits the diet, as well as bolsters demand. The check-off was approved by an overwhelming majority of cattlemen and we in the industry thank Congress for giving us the opportunity to prove the merits of a program funded by the producer.

**Conservation Reserve:** Thirty million acres have been enrolled for the conservation program. The probability of haying and grazing during the term of the CRP control was a prudent decision. Although Secretary Yeutter has revised the previous policy, we believe the drought relief measures were warranted.

**Haying and Grazing on Set-Aside Acres:** The new law passed in 1987 is a fair compromise that recognizes regional differences. In Montana, where a semi-arid climate influences set-aside acres, the debate over haying and grazing set-aside was not as intense as in other areas of the United States. We hope this will end the contentious debate on haying and grazing.

**Dairy:** The Dairy Termination Program was a disaster for the cattle industry. Mismanagement by the USDA-Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service in a hastily conceived program precipitated a law suit by cattlemen which forced USDA to follow an orderly marketing order previously outlined by Congress. It was a sad day for MSGA to bring suit against USDA. MSGA strongly believes dairy termination programs are counter-productive and should not be utilized in the future. Instead we should continue to use the National Milk Producers task force report which stated "that if milk supplies exceed demand by certain levels, the costs of the resulting excess removals be paid by those producers whose marketing exceed their allotted share of market requirements."

**Clear Title:** The clear title provisions of the 1985 Farm Act provided that no producer be forced to pay twice for products they buy. This

legislation was fully supported by MSGA. The single factor which led to the success of the 1985 Farm Bill was the fact that there were no major changes mid-term, giving the producer time to adjust their particular operation to the program.

The Montana Stockgrowers Association will be involved with the National Cattlemen's Association Agricultural Policy Committee in the development of the 1990 Farm Bill. We will work diligently with other agriculture groups to develop consensus and coalitions in order to create a farm bill we can all be proud of.

The new grain policy idea of triple base marketing is being aired as a way to provide program grain producers with flexibility in their planting decisions. Some proponents of the triple base plan would allow non-program crops to be grown on the operation's base. Would it be fair to allow nonprogram crops to be planted on protected program crop base acres? How would it affect producers who do not farm the government program? Grain policy, in any event, should continue to use market focus for price discovery.

Dairy policy will continue to concern cattlemen. The fear in the cattle industry is that if milk surpluses grow to an unreasonable amount, the government will again have to slaughter cows to remove the surplus. As I mentioned earlier in this testimony, if milk supplies exceed demand by certain levels, the cost of the resulting excess removal should be paid by those producers whose marketing exceeds their allocated share of market requirements. Montana Stockgrowers cannot idly stand by and allow dairy policy to be implemented that encourages over-production.

The Conservation Title of the 1990 Farm Bill may prove to be the most controversial aspect of the bill in the sense that forces outside of agriculture will have too much input into the title. We cattlemen are all concerned about the environment, but MSGA questions the methods used to address the situation. We believe it is imperative to closely guard private property rights as Congress writes environmental laws. Ranchers will depend on both the Senate and House Agricultural Committees to defend and protect private property.



The Conservation Reserve Program will again be reviewed in 1990 and the question foremost in our minds is what will be done with the land under CRP after the conditions of the contract are fulfilled. We would like to see the land returned to commercial use with no restrictions. If payment is to be made to a CRP participant for extending his lease, then the no haying or grazing position of the law must remain intact.

Recently two bills have been introduced in the Senate to amend the Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, Senate Bill 1159 and 1200. Both of these bills refer to control of noxious weeds on federal lands and adjacent lands under state or private ownership. Funds will be appropriated by Congress to fund these programs with additional funds coming from state and private landowners.

There has been very little weed control on both Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service lands in many instances. In fact, over 4 million acres of knapweed can be found in western Montana alone. Although the programs suggest a large appropriation, these programs are absolutely necessary if we are to return the lands to productivity. It will give the individual adjoining federal lands an opportunity to cost share in the eradication of noxious weeds. This legislation will probably be tied to the 1990 Farm Bill.

There will be other issues that surface before the 1990 Farm Bill is written. The Montana Stockgrowers and their national affiliate, the National Cattlemen's Association, will follow all titles and will take part in developing any programs that affect our industry. In fact, items such as restricted use of pesticides, further encroachment on ranchers to protect wildlife habitat, additional efforts to improve and monitor water quality and recreational access to lands involved in the farm program will all merit close scrutiny by MSGA.

## Montana Woolgrowers Association

*Bob Gilbert*

Secretary/Treasurer

I represent the 2,608 members of the Montana Woolgrowers Association who raise wool and lambs in Montana. Our association is the oldest livestock association in the state, having had our first meeting in January of 1883, some six years before Montana became a state.

We appreciate you taking the time to hold these field hearings on the subject of the 1990 Farm Bill and our testimony today is with regard to the Wool Act, which is a part of the overall farm bill.

Since the first passage of this piece of landmark legislation some 35 years ago, 1954, the act has served the growers of wool and lamb extremely well. It has given Montana sheep producers the ability to compete with foreign imports of raw wool. That has been accomplished due to the unique funding provisions within the Wool Act.

According to the report on the Wool Act filed in 1954 and from testimony at Wool Act hearings, "The National Wool Act of 1954" provides a permanent appropriation to the Commodity Credit Corporation under which the corporation is reimbursed each fiscal year an amount to cover program costs that cannot exceed 70 percent of the wool duties collected under tariff agreements. This was a key to passage. What we had was foreign tariffs on imported wool paying for the program. Bottom line on this program is that it is a money-making program for the U.S. Treasury because the law provides for up to 70 percent of the tariffs collected to be used. Only 35-40 percent has been used.

So while this program has not cost the taxpayer—in fact, enriched the taxpayers' funds which are appropriated by Congress—the program has kept some 115,000 people in the United States raising wool and lamb. The alternative is to rely on imports, and you are all familiar with the balance of trade deficit.

The Wool Act also provides for deductions from the incentive checks. Deductions that are



used by our industry to promote wool and lamb. Some of those funds, as a result of changes in the Wool Act in 1985, are being used to try and compete U.S. wools in the world wool market.

The Montana Woolgrowers Association and the American Sheep Industry Association is requesting that Congress renew the Wool Act just as it is written. We oppose any changes that might eliminate participation of the small grower, and we also oppose limitations on larger growers. We believe larger growers should be paid on the merits of provisions of the current act and not be penalized just because they chose to raise 10,000, 15,000, or more sheep. We ask for no changes in a program that is working for the American sheep producers. It is a non-cost program for the U.S. Treasury and provides monies for an industry-supported self-help program.

---

## National Wildlife Federation

*Tom France*

Director, Northern Rockies Natural Resource Center

I'm speaking on behalf of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the nation's largest conservation organization with over 5.8 million members and supporters, and the Montana Wildlife Federation, with a membership of over 6,000 sportsmen and conservationists.

While the purpose of this forum is to discuss the 1990 Farm Act, all of us here today recognize the impact of agriculture on wildlife and the environment. Agriculture has dramatically changed the face of the northern Great Plains in the last 100 years, as tens of millions of acres have been converted from short grass prairies into monocultures of grain, and additional millions of acres of wetlands have been drained and put into crop production. This shift in land use, while providing this nation and the world with a great bounty of foodstuffs, has not come without cost. Just as the northern plains are astonishingly productive of food and fiber, they can be equally productive of wildlife. While Montana still has wildlife populations that are

the envy of many states, the wildlife losses of the last century are staggering.

The 1985 Farm Act represented an important step forward in reconciling the nation's need for a sensible farm policy with the national ambition of restoring wildlife populations and protecting and enhancing the environment. As we look forward to reauthorizing the Farm Act in 1990, it is appropriate that we review how the major conservation provisions have worked and where additional protections are necessary.

### Swampbuster

A major conservation breakthrough in the 1985 Farm Act was the swampbuster provision, under which all federal subsidies can be terminated if wetlands are drained and the acreage put into crop production. The purpose behind this provision was to slow the pace of wetland drainage which the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates is occurring at a rate of 300,000 to 400,000 acres annually with the agricultural industry accounting for 90 percent of this loss. While swampbuster has undoubtedly saved some wetlands from drainage, a number of problems have become evident with both the statute itself and its implementation.

First and foremost, under the law as written, benefits are withheld only after drained wetlands are put into commercial production, not when the wetland is actually drained. Some producers have taken advantage of this loophole by draining wetlands and then planting the area to hay or other non-commercial crops. There is suspicion that these acres will ultimately end up in the commercial farmland base because it is much more difficult to monitor land use after wetlands have been ditched and drained. Because the first purpose of swampbuster is to prevent wetland drainage, the statute must be amended so that federal benefits are withheld at the time wetlands are eliminated, not when crops are actually planted.

Beyond this weakness in the statute itself, there have been other problems with how the law has been applied. First, in the Dakotas and in Minnesota, the Federation has documented numerous instances in which local ASCS offices have approved drainage requests by finding

that construction on the project had "commenced" prior to the 1985 Act's passage when in fact the project was only in the planning stage. These "commencement" determinations have been the cause of major problems in gaining the full protection of wetland values that the swampbuster was intended to provide. Two changes need to be made to eliminate this issue in the future. Swampbuster should be strengthened by exempting only those projects where physical construction occurred prior to the law's initial passage in 1985. Judicial review should be provided for ASCS commencement decisions. While NWF has successfully appealed several decisions regarding drainage commencement, there are no formal provisions in either law or regulation for such reviews to take place. Citizen oversight is a necessary component of wetland protection.

Secondly, we have noted that there have been problems in Montana in defining what constitutes a wetland. I recently flew over a slough in eastern Pondera County slated to be drained, which the Soil Conservation Service refuses to acknowledge as a wetland, even though it held water on August 16 in an average precipitation year. According to SCS there is not sufficient evidence of the hydric soils ordinarily associated with permanent wetlands, nor is there a photographic history of the pothole's existence. SCS is maintaining this overly technical position despite the obvious on-the-ground evidence to the contrary and over the objection of fish and wildlife agencies, which have asserted that the area provides important wetland values.

This dispute shows that where wetland conversion is involved, the benefit of the doubt is going to the producer and not to protecting the resource. This approach is fundamentally at odds with the central purpose of the swampbuster legislation. As Congress noted, much of the wetlands lost in recent years can be attributed to conversion to agricultural uses. At the present surplus of ag production, there is no need for the conversion of more resources into agricultural production, especially when those wetland resources have such inherent value and provide such practical benefits. H. Rep. 99-271, Part I, 99th Cong. 1st Sess. 77 (1985).

Congress can address this problem with the 1985 Farm Bill in two ways. It can amend the law to provide that wetland determinations are made by fish and wildlife agencies whose mission is wetland protection and who have the staff expertise to recognize wetland values. Alternatively, we need better training of field personnel and a rigorous process for resolving disputes. At the present time there is little continuity in how wetland determinations are made, nor is there any defined method for how disputes will be resolved.

#### Conservation Reserve Program and Sodbuster

The Conservation Reserve Program was established to convert highly erodible croplands to permanent cover and sodbuster, under which federal benefits can be terminated if highly erodible soils presently in permanent cover are plowed out in the absence of an approved conservation plan.

These provisions are important to Montana because the state has an estimated 3.5 million acres of land eligible for inclusion in the CRP, of which some 2.5 million acres have actually been enrolled in the last five years. In addition, Montana has over 2 million acres of fragile land that are not presently cropped but have a high or medium potential for conversion to cropland. (See H. Rep. 99-271 at p. 85.) As with swampbuster, there are indications that the promises of CRP and sodbuster are being only partially fulfilled and that serious problems exist in both the law itself and how it is being applied.

Mirroring the holes in swampbuster that I have already discussed, sodbuster allows farmers to break out native rangeland even where the soils are extremely fragile if the Soil Conservation Service has approved a conservation plan for the area. Because of this provision, native rangeland continues to go under the plow as plans of doubtful effectiveness are drafted, approved with only minimal review, and allowed to be implemented without any enforcement program.

Compounding this problem is the fact that some, and perhaps many, producers who have sought approval to plow out new croplands have also enrolled acreage in the CRP. In effect



taxpayers are paying farmers to idle some fragile lands even while other lands with equally unstable soils are going under the plow.

This double dipping defeats the goals of the 1985 Farm Act in at least two ways. First, lands being enrolled in the CRP program are not initially as productive in terms of providing either wildlife habitat or soil stability as native rangeland. From a conservationist's perspective, we would be better off in most instances paying farmers not to break out existing rangeland rather than paying them to restore lands that have already been farmed. Secondly, an important purpose of CRP was to reduce production and thereby increase commodity prices. This intent is defeated entirely when new acreage is opened up and planted.

The National and Montana Wildlife Federations are also concerned with the quality of the conservation plans being developed by SCS, as well as the agency's failure to comply with other federal statutes. The plans we have examined offer little beyond mathematical calculations concerning soil erosion rates and prescriptions of doubtful effectiveness for reducing these rates. There is virtually no qualitative analysis and no serious evaluation of other non-soil values, such as watershed impacts or wildlife habitat. In short, there is little justification for labeling these efforts a "conservation plan." Perhaps most importantly, few, if any, requests to break out new ground appear to have been forestalled through the planning process. Under such circumstances, denying federal benefits whenever fragile soils are broken out may be an appropriate legislative remedy.

While we have only begun our evaluation, and fully intend to review more plans later this fall, it is evident that SCS was given a gigantic task in developing and approving conservation plans prior to 1990. Under such pressure, it was not possible for SCS to give serious consideration to the full range of conservation possibilities through the planning process. As we look to reauthorizing the farm bill next year, however, Congress should consider requiring a review of such plans prior to their implementation. During this review SCS should make sure that plans were developed in full compliance

with the National Environmental Policy Act and other federal statutes. At this point, most plans have been prepared in a statutory vacuum.

NWF and MWF are also concerned that Montana is not realizing the full benefits from the CRP. As noted, some 2.5 million acres have been enrolled in the program, but much of this acreage has been planted not to native grasses but to a monoculture of crested wheat grass, a species of plant that offers little to wildlife. There can be little justification for such practices, especially in light of the congressional history behind the 1985 law which specifically indicates that fish and wildlife benefits were an expected byproduct of CRP. The next version of the farm act should require newly enrolled CRP lands to be planted to a mix of native grasses.

In this same context we must question the haste to graze and hay conservation reserve acreages during the last two years. While the statute presently provides for allowing such practices under drought conditions, wildlife suffered severely during the drought of 1988 and needed all available habitat during that hard summer. Farmers, moreover, were paid up to \$50,000 to take lands in the CRP out of production, and thus were compensated for keeping this land idle. More disturbingly, some counties in Montana were early on declared in drought this year and CRP lands were again opened to grazing and haying. While 1988 was perhaps the exceptional year when rules had to be bent, 1989 is not such a year. Either the rules governing the drought declaration must be tightened or the emergency provisions of the CRP should be eliminated. Unless this occurs, it is a virtual certainty that CRP lands in the northern plains, where three years of low rainfall are commonplace, will be utilized in four or five years out of the ten-year contract period.

While the primary purpose behind CRP is to prevent the cropping of highly erosive soils, we do believe a calculated expansion of the program is warranted. Farmers should be able to enroll windbreaks and shelterbelts in the program as well as restored wetlands and associated upland areas. While the acreages involved in expanding the program to include these conservation practices would be small, the



benefits in terms of soil erosion, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat restoration would be exceptional.

Finally, as a way of complementing the CRP, we recommend that the 1990 Farm Act adjust the annual set-aside program to allow farmers to sign multi-year contracts. At present, the conservation benefits of the set-aside program are minimal, since lands are frequently enrolled for one year and plowed the next, even as other lands are put into the program. By permitting farmers to set aside such lands for a period of years, other benefits in terms of wildlife and watershed protection would be greatly improved.

#### Conclusion

I would like to say that NWF and MWF are only now formulating positions on the 1990 Farm Bill reauthorization. We recognize that we don't have all the answers, and are anxious to work with both farm and non-farm organizations in developing legislative solutions that provide for both a stable farm economy and a healthy rural environment.

1 In most instances, the justification for planting crested wheatgrass has been that it rapidly establishes itself and thus stands as a barrier to weed infestations. While planting to native species can also fulfill this goal, it is interesting to note that preventing weeds was not a listed goal of the CRP. According to the legislative record, a successful conservation reserve would:

- Protect our long-term capability to produce food and fiber,
- Reduce soil erosion on land in the program by as much as 20 tons a year,
- Reduce sedimentation in streams and along roads,
- Improve water quality,
- Create better habitat for fish and wildlife through improved food and cover and better moisture conditions,
- Curb production of surplus commodities, and
- Provide some need income support for farmers.

H. Rep. 99-271, Part 1, 99th Cong. 1st Sess., 81.

## Northern Plains Resource Council

*Monte Mlekush*  
Chairperson

I think we are all here because we are deeply concerned about soil and water conservation. But how can we conserve our soil and water? We can make sure that the 1990 Farm Bill does four things:

- 1) increases farm income by raising commodity price support levels,
- 2) manages production on a bushelage-basis instead of using acreage controls, and
- 3) targets incentives to family-sized farms,
- 4) provides incentives for moving toward low chemical input, sustainable production.

#### Increase Farm Income

If we want to protect our soil and water, we had better not leave it to huge corporate farms and insurance companies. Family farmers have more than a financial stake in the land; they feel a moral obligation to it. My farm has been in the family for three generations, and I plan to pass it on to my children, so I farm with conservation in mind.

But no one can stay in business long when the price you receive is less than the cost of production. Between the time that the 1985 Farm Bill was enacted and 1988, 484,000 farmers left the land. That's just three years. If we want our soil and water to be conserved, we must increase net farm income for family farmers by increasing price supports to cover the cost of production with a profit so our most conservation conscious farmers can survive.

Another advantage of raising the loan rate on farm commodities is an estimated annual savings to the U.S. government of \$14 billion in direct subsidy payments.

#### Bushelage-Based Supply Management

The 85 Farm Bill attempted to control supplies by using acreage set-asides. Simply put, if the secretary of agriculture determines that only 80 percent of our nation's productive capability is needed, he requires an approximate 20 percent acreage set-aside. Consequently, farmers leave

their poorest land idle and then try to maximize production on the remaining acres by increasing the use of chemical inputs.

A more reasonable approach to supply management is a bushelage-based system. To determine the number of bushels each farmer can market, multiply base acres by proven yield or county averages to estimate total production for each farm. The secretary of agriculture can then calculate what percentage of our national production capability we actually need to satisfy domestic and export demand, maintain strategic reserves, and maintain charitable food programs; much as it's done under the current acreage set-aside program. The difference is that instead of deciding that we must idle 20 percent of our acreage because we only need 80 percent of our productive capability, the secretary multiplies each farmer's estimated production by the 80 percent factor. So if a farmer had a 1,000-acre base and a proven yield of 30 bushels, that would be an estimated production of 30,000 bushels. He would then be issued marketing certificates for 80 percent of 30,000, or a total of 24,000 bushels. The advantage of this method is that it is a more precise way of managing supplies. It also redefines efficiency. Since the farmer could only market 24,000 bushels, he has no incentive to produce more than we need by maximizing chemical usage. This means farmers would begin producing their allotted production in the most cost effective manner, resulting in the use of less chemical inputs.

**Target Benefits to Small and Medium Farms**  
Does everyone remember John Greytak, the investor who became the one of the world's largest wheat farmers by sodbusting thousands of acres? One of his farms borders mine. Huge areas were sodbusted, resulting in soil erosion so severe that fence rows have filled up two feet high and blew out several times. John Greytak, and countless corporate farmers like him, farm with only the dollar in mind.

Countless polls reveal overwhelming public support for preserving a viable system of family-sized farms. To do this we must provide incentives to farmers of this size by issuing them a greater percentage of marketing certificates for their total production capability than

are issued to large corporate farms. For example, if the secretary determines that we need only 80 percent of our total productive capacity, the largest farms could be issued marketing certificates for less than 80 percent of their total capability and the smallest farms could be issued more than 80 percent.

#### Incentives for Sustainable Farming Practices

Would anyone here use farm chemicals if they didn't feel they were necessary? Of course not. No farmer wants to spend the extra money for them or the additional time applying them. However, to stop using all herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers overnight is not feasible for most farmers. Anyone who has switched to sustainable farming will tell you that yields may drop during the first three to five years of the transition. It takes the land time to rebuild itself and new farming methods must be adopted. Most farmers are far too close to the edge to make this transition without help. To facilitate the move to sustainable methods, financial incentives must be given to farmers who wish to reduce chemical inputs to make it affordable. This, combined with additional technical assistance from the extension service, would contribute greatly to the conservation of our soil and water resources.

#### Summary

Our policymakers must face some tough problems when designing the 1990 Farm Bill. Our rural economy continues to deteriorate as low commodity prices deny adequate income to farmers, our federal budget deficit continues to grow, our soil and water continue to be degraded, and consumers demand food produced with far fewer chemicals.

I believe that by raising price support levels above the cost of production, managing supplies on a bushelage-basis, targeting benefits to small and medium-sized producers and providing incentive for low chemical input, sustainable agriculture we can effectively address these problems. We can save rural America by increasing farm income, save the federal government about \$14 billion annually by eliminating subsidy payments, encourage better conservation of our precious soil and water and be sensitive to the new demands of the market.



## Rural Area Development Association

*Jim Stephens*

Agricultural Policy Subcommittee

The Rural Area Development (RAD) Association has not yet formulated a policy on agriculture for the RAD Committee. We realize the importance of a farm program that serves its purposes, including soil conservation, weed control, and maintaining fair farm income for the producers.

RAD is made up of all segments of the economy and society, which makes it tough to get on track with one policy. We sent a letter to farm organizations asking for comments. After going through these we saw there was a diverse opinion on all of these policy issues, but are hopeful we can come up with a policy.

We sent questionnaires to various farm organizations we thought would be interested—Farmers Union, Farm Bureau, the Montana Association of Churches, the Montana Catholic Conference, the Montana Stockgrowers, and Montana Beef Growers, and Montana Grain Growers. Some of our questions addressed target prices to support farm income, export subsidies for American agricultural products, non-recourse loans to support agricultural prices, limits on government payments to individual farmers, supply control programs such as CRP, set-aside acreages, dairy buyouts, bushel allotments, trade restrictions, limiting farm program costs to taxpayers and consumers, environmental impact on agricultural practices, subsidize credit for agriculture, food aid for developing countries, PL480, emergency feed programs for livestock, decoupling, direct income support for farmers rather than commodity price supports, and required conservation plans for each farm in order to participate in the federal agriculture program.

We realize there were many more questions that we could have asked. We've had a lot of discussion on what is our most critical situation—soil conservation. This weed situation is a bad one, and we know that CRP is not going to help it, but we're going to have to learn to conquer it.

## Society for Range Management *Public Affairs Committee*

The Society believes the following 1985 Farm Bill items should be continued:

1. Retain the major conservation provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act, including sodbuster, swampbuster, conservation compliance, and the Conservation Reserve Program.
2. Continue to reduce agricultural subsidies, particularly those that contribute to the production of commodities at the expense of resource conservation.

New actions and recommendations for the 1990 Farm Bill:

### Conservation Reserve Program

- Additional incentives are needed to promote the planting of trees on CRP acres. Cost-share rates for planting trees should be increased to 75 or 80 percent.
- The CRP signup period should be extended beyond 1990 to a date when the 45 million acre goal is reached.
- CRP contracts containing tree plantings and contracts on lands with the most severe erosion hazards should be extended to 15 years.
- The CRP eligibility criteria should be changed to delete the 2T with gullies and 3T erosion rate criteria. In its place a criteria based on an Erosion Index should be added.
- Remove disincentives and provide incentives to encourage CRP participants to maintain the established conservation cover on the land following the expiration of the contract. This could be accomplished by allowing crop bases to be maintained.
- Amend the CRP eligibility criteria to automatically qualify fields considered to be HEL (highly erodible land based on the definition used for sodbuster and conservation compliance) except fields which have been sodbusted since December 1985.

### Highly Erodible Land

- Adequate federal resources must be provided to implement the conservation provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act. The initial application of the conservation compliance plans and the followup needed to assure their continued maintenance will place a heavy workload on SCS field personnel.



### Wetlands

- Amend swampbuster provisions to require the restoration of converted wetlands prior to being eligible for USDA program benefits. Currently, a swampbuster can maintain eligibility by not planting an annually tilled crop on converted wetlands.

### Water Quality

- Include provisions in the 1990 Farm Bill for testing groundwater resources in order to expand our knowledge base of the resource and threats to its quality.
- Nonpoint source pollution, particularly sediment, is the predominant cause of water quality degradation in many of the nation's rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. Provisions to reduce nonpoint source pollution should be included in Title XII of the 1990 Farm Bill.

### Agricultural Subsidies

- The 1990 Farm Bill should begin to address the conflicts between supply management policies and conservation initiatives. Annual changes in acreage set-aside requirements make it difficult for farmers to apply long-term conservation measures to their farmlands. We believe that farmers should be allowed the option of choosing multiyear set-asides without loss of program benefits.

### Riparian Areas

- According to the June 1988 GAO report, "Public Rangelands—Some Riparian Areas Restored but Widespread Improvement Will be Slow," a major deterrent to widespread improvement of degraded publicly owned riparian areas is the lack of adequate funding to fully implement the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service policies for improving riparian areas. We urge adequate funding be provided so that existing policies can be fully implemented to protect these resources. In addition, these agencies should be directed to inventory the amount, condition, and trend of public riparian areas and develop measurable goals for restoring degraded areas.

### Low Input Sustainable Agriculture

- Include incentives in the 1990 Farm Bill for the adoption of low-input sustainable farming

techniques.

- Direct USDA to expand research and education efforts in the area of low-input agricultural practices.

### Noxious Weed Management

- Develop and implement a national policy on noxious weed management which encourages the development and use of biological control methods.

### Coordinated Resource Management

This process for bringing people together has to receive more national emphasis and support. It needs to be broader in focus to include all environmental issues and the people that can work out reasonable alternatives and solutions to our national resource concerns.

### Management of Rangeland Watersheds

This country depends heavily on western rangelands for water quantity and quality. The upland watershed management is crucial to our water supplies. If these lands lack the adequate cover necessary to retain or store water, then the result is accelerated erosion and a significant effect on water quality. The 1990 Farm Bill should place a stronger commitment toward this issue. In addition, ground water supplies should be inventoried and tested for water quality.

### 1990 Farm Bill

Provisions in the 1990 Farm Bill should be made to allow groups, individuals, organizations, agencies, etc., to lease established CRP ground for wildlife preservation. On a voluntary basis, landowners could enter into an agreement to retain the CRP ground and in return would receive monetary compensation or incentive.

### Other recommendations

- Extend the USDA cost-sharing programs, Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) and the Great Plains Conservation Program (GPCP) with appropriate modifications to address water quality concerns, noxious weed control, and the need to raise the cost-share limits due to the increased costs of applying needed conservation treatment.

## Western Organization of Resource Councils

*Hellen Waller*  
Vice President

The Western Organization of Resource Councils has member organizations in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and Montana.

In 1937 President Franklin Roosevelt sent a letter to governors urging uniform soil conservation laws. He stated, "The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself."

Various legislative acts and farm programs since then have attempted to address this issue in a positive way, while other policies have been in direct conflict to good soil and water conservation practices. In that respect, the 1985 Food Security Act has been a mixed bag, with some good sections and some provisions creating farming practices detrimental to good soil and water conservation efforts.

The 1990 Farm Bill debate provides an opportunity for us to assess the desirability of current policies and programs, and to make necessary changes.

Since the 1985 Food Security Act went into effect, almost 500 Montana farmers have gone out of business. Nationwide that number is approximately 400,000. This trend increases the number of management decisions made by non-operators sometimes far removed from the land.

I believe that if we are serious about better soil and water conservation methods being practiced, it is essential that we preserve an economically viable family farm system in American agriculture. We need to adopt national farm policy that allows the owner-operator the economic flexibility to make management decisions based upon sustainability.

I would like to identify provisions in the current law which do not promote good stewardship practices, and make recommendations for changes that should be made during the current debate of the 1990 Farm Bill.

### The Economic Squeeze

To the detriment of sustainable practices under the current farm program, the target prices and loan rates on program crops have, on an annual basis, been systematically lowered. To the producer this means less net income per bushel. In order to meet a cashflow, the only way to survive financially is to increase bushels to maximum production per acre to compensate for the loss in price per bushel. This results in more intensive farming practices with more chemical use based upon a need for greater production rather than an opportunity to practice good land stewardship.

The increased use of chemicals poses a question raised by consumers concerning health risks, as well as concerns of farmers and commercial applicators as to their safety.

The lack of adequate farm income generated in the marketplace makes some farmers' management decisions subject to lenders who sometimes withhold operating money from farmers who wish to practice more sustainable methods of production.

### Protection of Base Acres

Because of stipulations in the current farm program, a producer sometimes makes planting decisions necessary to protect base acreages rather than to rotate crops or plant legumes which would be a more environmentally sound practice.

### Conservation Reserve Program

Although the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has removed many fragile acres from the production of grain, the land has also produced about as many acres of weeds which continue to tear down neighbors' fences and infest their fields with weed seeds. In some cases very little grass has been established. In some areas there has been a sorry lack of enforcement of the program on the local level. This is not the farmers' fault, but agencies which allow indifference toward the intent and discipline of the program.

### Establishment of Farm Plans

There is a serious conflict between what is dictated that a farmer must do within their farm plan, and the desire a producer might have to



reduce chemical use. If a farmer wishes to practice sustainable methods, then he should not be required that they increase chemical use in order to comply with the SCS-administered farm plan.

Furthermore, if the law requires greater involvement by the SCS in the administration of farm programs, the SCS should not be criticized for increasing staff numbers.

#### Recommendations for the 1990 Farm Bill Debate

- Raise the loan rate on program commodities to cover the cost of production.
- Allow farmers to manage production on a bushels marketed quota rather than by acres planted. This would allow a producer the flexibility necessary to manage their cropland in such a way that their quota could be raised on whatever acres the farmer deemed appropriate, and allow for more sustainable farming practices.
- Allow rotation of crops and planting of legumes without losing crop base acres.
- Delay any further increase in CRP acres until a thorough evaluation of current levels is completed. This should include both positive and negative effects to farmers, their local communities, and the state's economy.
- Establish guidelines for realistic farm plans sensitive to field achievability with a goal of sustainability.
- A fundamental principle of authority by Congress for the writing of the 1990 Farm Bill, which is not subject to revision by the administration's appointed trade representative to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Farming must not be reduced to a series of rules and regulations to comply with, but rather, a profession which assumes the awesome responsibility for using the land to bring forth the very sustenance of life, for today and for future generations. Helen Hoover said it best, "Man thinks of himself as a creator instead of a user, and this delusion is robbing him, not only of his natural heritage, but perhaps of his future."

## Women Involved in Farm Economics

*Esther Ruud*  
Past President

Women Involved in Farm Economics' (WIFE) goal is to obtain not only a cost-of-production for all agricultural producers, but also to be able to receive a reasonable profit for those products at the market place, which we have been unable to do for many years.

In 1950, I received \$150 per month as head bookkeeper, and we received \$1.98 per bushel for our spring wheat. You could buy a new pickup for about \$1,500. Now, 49 years later we have received \$3.61 per bushel for our wheat, and will probably get about 30 cents additional deficiency payment, which means we will get about \$3.91 per bushel, or \$1.93 more per bushel than we did 49 years ago, a little less than double the amount we got then.

However, a new pickup now costs about \$15,000. Do you think that a busy office could hire a head bookkeeper for \$300, which is double what I got in 1950. The pickup costs about 10 times the amount it did 49 years ago, the bookkeeper gets between seven to ten times what they got 49 years ago, however, the farmer is supposed to be able to make it by only getting double the amount he got 49 years ago. Have your own wages only doubled in the last 49 years? Is there any wonder that more and more farmers and ranchers are losing their farms and ranches?

Since most members of WIFE live on "family farms, I would like to give you WIFE's definition of a "family farm." "A form of business enterprise in which the management decisions are made by a family engaged in the production of food or fiber for profit, which is intended to provide the major source of income and capital for investment. After all, what business can continue without making a reasonable profit?

I would like to stress this about conservation. Many of us would gladly do a great deal more conservation at our own expense, if we were making a profit.



WIFE's position on some of the issues:

WIFE believes that federal and state governments often claim jurisdiction over our national resources, particularly water. Therefore, we believe the national water policy should recognize the rights to administer individual water laws and manage water resources within states, and that the policy should respect rights established by interstate water compacts adopted by respective states and ratified by Congress.

We also support programs that allow landowners, the Soil Conservation Service, area water agencies and conservation districts to establish voluntary management practices on ag lands and waters of the nation, and that funding be revolving (payback) fund programs.

Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution significantly impacts water quality, which includes both natural and manmade contributions and the types of nonpoint sources that need to be controlled, and the means for effectively implementing these controls vary significantly from state to state. Therefore, we oppose mandatory federal control of NPS of pollution, with compliance deadlines and far-reaching cross-compliance implications. We believe this would be counter productive to accomplishing the goals of the Clean Water Act. Mandated Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) intervention in the efforts of states to address their NPS problems would be highly disruptive and an abridgement of state primacy. Therefore, we support continued state leadership in controlling NPS of pollution on a flexible basis consistent with the needs of the individual states. Before any new federal authority of programs is mandated, we urge that existing programs should first be examined for adequacy, particularly from the funding standpoint.

In reference to wilderness, we believe that millions of acres of land in the United States have been set aside for wilderness study without consideration for energy needs or economic impacts. Use of these areas, should they become wilderness, would be limited to the young and able-bodied because of the restrictions against motorized access, rather than the way these lands have previously been managed under the multiple-use concept, which benefits both producers and recreationists.

Therefore, we oppose the setting aside of any area of land not meeting the criteria of "true wilderness" and we urge that multiple-use be continued.

As many of us in America are professional farmers, we want to be good stewards of the soil and practice the best conservation methods possible. After all, our livelihood depends on this practice, not only for ourselves, but for future generations. After all, "we realize that all new wealth is generated from the land." Therefore, we urge the best conservation methods be employed, as we do not condone the misuse and ultimate destruction of this fragile land.

WIFE supports and will work toward the goal of requiring companies who create hazardous wastes to recycle and reuse waste on-site. We oppose all hazardous waste sites be located in rural areas.

Since recreationists have access to streams flowing through private lands, we believe entering lands without landowners' permission is trespassing. We support legislation that will remove the burden of liability and damages from private landowners.

Noxious weeds are costing U.S. producers and consumers millions of dollars every year. We strongly request federal government agencies and/or bureaus establish a more effective program in coordination with state and private weed control efforts and provide the necessary funding to carry this through.

Salinity is also a problem in Montana. One only needs to fly along the Milk River, or visit the Bowdoin Wildlife Refuge just east of Malta, to realize what a grave problem salinity is in our state. I have no idea how many livestock, fish and wildlife are lost to this contamination, or how many human health problems arise out of the elevated levels of nitrates and selenium that are caused by saline seep. If this can be controlled by planting alfalfa, and other deep-rooted plants, we should be promoting this practice. If farmers are having this problem in their fields, they should be allowed to plant these deep rooted plants and not lose their crop bases, or payments that they would normally receive under the farm program.







